

## Public Comments Pour In to EPA, DNR

By Susan Pastor, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Approximately 600 comments concerning proposed changes to the 2003 cleanup decision for certain sections of the Lower Fox River/Green Bay site were submitted to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Written comments came in the form of postal mail, Internet and fax during the 60-day comment period from Nov. 13, 2006 to Jan. 11, 2007. In addition, several comments were read into the public record during a Dec. 5, 2006 public meeting held by EPA and DNR. Over 300 people attended the three-hour meeting held at the Brown County Library in Green Bay.

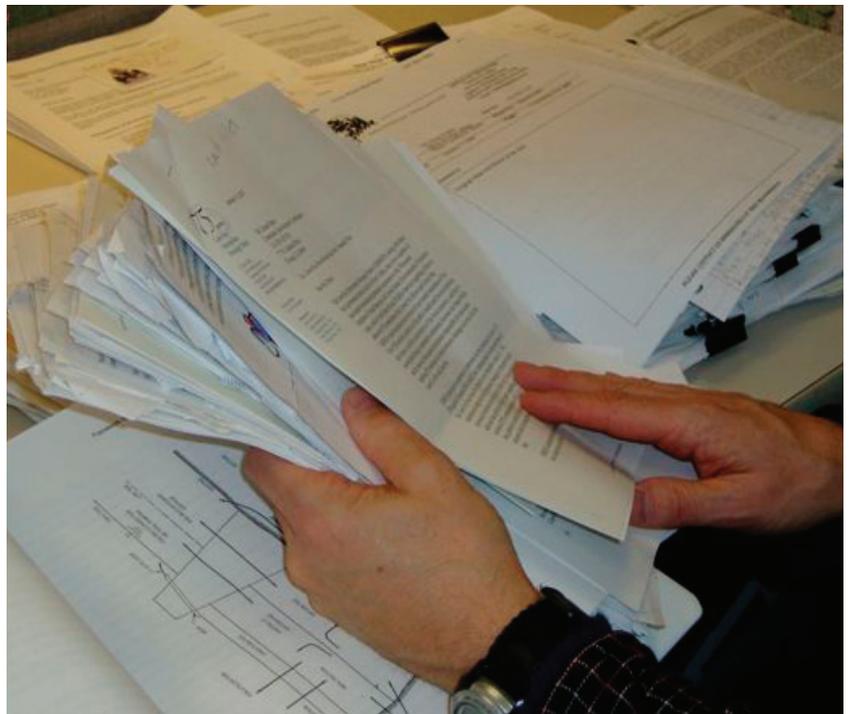
Positive and negative feedback was sent by area residents, environmental groups, educators, elected officials, and businesses. While many people took advantage of hard copy and online forms to provide their input, others used handwritten stationary, letterhead, petitions and postcards to express their views.

Although most of the comments lodged were clearly for or against the proposed changes, some people offered helpful suggestions which may be incorporated into the final decision document later this year, according to EPA Remedial Project Manager Jim Hahnenberg. "Several modifications

may be made to our recommended changes based on public comments," he said.

EPA and DNR proposed changes that would combine capping with dredging in areas of the river from Appleton to Green Bay. This plan would separate the site into much smaller areas to allow the cleanup to be customized to meet special conditions in each area. Under this plan, the cleanup would be done faster and would make better use of limited landfill space.

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*EPA Remedial Project Manager Jim Hahnenberg reviews hundreds of public comments concerning proposed changes to the 2003 cleanup decision.*

# Shipwreck Identified in Recent Study

By Susan Pastor, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

A shipwreck at the bottom of the Lower Fox River was spotted in a recent archaeological review near the area set for dredging this spring.

The steamship named the City of Stiles in 1881 was found within a mile of the project area along the western side of the river northwest of the DePere Dam. Although the ship is near the area to be dredged, it is not expected to interfere with this summer's cleanup. If it appears to be in the way as work progresses, a plan to go around it would have to be developed.

"Our first choice is always to avoid the area entirely, but right now it looks like we can proceed with our dredging operation," said EPA Remedial Project Manager Jim Hahnenberg. "If the ship did turn out to be a problem for us, we would probably have to find a way to move it or bring it up."

The ship, originally christened the L.P. Sheldon when it was built in Oshkosh in 1869, sank in the



*Environmental contractors use specialized equipment with GPS technology to collect archaeological data.*



*Lumber and wood chippings discovered during an archaeological review reveal information about historic activity in the area to be dredged this spring.*

mud after it caught fire in 1901 while docked in the river near today's Brown County Fairgrounds. It was deemed a total loss and was never salvaged.

Based on the presence of sawdust, wood chippings and lumber along the shoreline, the archival review also uncovered many structures associated with historic industries near the project area. Although they are not standing today, the review uncovered a series of buildings near the southern portion of the area that appear to be where several sawmills and two large docks were once located. According to an 1889 Brown County plat map, these types of activities were historically practiced along the Lower Fox River.

If the area needs to be expanded in the future, an additional survey would be done to the southeast, particularly where the sawmill docks were located. According to the review, if any archaeological materials are found during the dredging, the Historic Preservation Office of the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison will be notified.

# Two Dredging Projects to Start by May

By Susan Pastor, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Two sediment dredging projects are scheduled to start this spring in Little Lake Butte des Morts and in the Lower Fox River just below the DePere Dam.

Sediment with high levels of PCBs will be removed beginning in late April. This “hot spot” area, which has PCBs as high as 3,000 parts per million, was discovered in 2004 by contractors working for Georgia-Pacific and NCR Corp. They are designing the cleanup for this portion of the project.

According to EPA Remedial Project Manager Jim Hahnenberg, EPA and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources are concerned when levels are over 1 ppm. “Since that time, contractors have been verifying these high levels by taking additional samples cores, analyzing more samples and developing engineering plans to come up with the best procedure to follow to remove this contaminated sediment,” he stated.

The fourth season of dredging in Little Lake Butte des Morts will begin by May 1, Hahnenberg continued. “I assume that the dredges will again operate 24 hours a day, five or six days a week,” he said.

To ensure minimal disruption to residents and boaters on and around the lake, the dredges are equipped with global positioning systems to make them among the quietest available while locating the right places for sediment removal. Each dredge will have two operators working on them. Sediment and water testing will continue during the process.

EPA and DNR, with the assistance of a technical team from an Appleton engineering company, will again oversee the project to ensure that state and federal laws are followed.



## Out and About...

By Susan Pastor, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

The Fox River Intergovernmental Partnership is made up of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin and Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin. These partners, as well as other supporting agencies, regularly provide speakers to organizations in the Fox Valley area. The following people recently made presentations:

### January

- ◆ *Jim Hahnenberg, EPA:* International Conference on Remediation of Contaminated Sediments, Savannah, GA; Little Lake Butte des Morts dredging project.

*The Fox River Current is featuring promising natural resource damage assessment projects in and near the Lower Fox River.*

# Spotlight On:

## Wetland Restoration on the Fox River National Wildlife Refuge

By Colette Charbonneau, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Fox River National Wildlife Refuge, managed through U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Horicon NWR, encompasses 1,004 acres, of which 800 acres are wetland habitat (wildlife homes), along the Fox River in Marquette County, Wis. Prior to refuge establishment in 1979, approximately 400 acres of wet prairie, sedge meadow, and shallow marsh wetland were illegally ditched for agricultural development. The previous owner was required to fill in the illegal ditches but was not able to complete the work. Therefore, the federal government acquired the land.

The illegal ditches carry sediment, pesticides and fertilizer from upstream farming operations straight into the Fox River. The historic wetlands that once filtered water flowing to the river have lost native wetland vegetation and non-native upland shrubs have been taking over the area. This reduces the ecological value of the land for migratory birds and fish that use the wetlands.

The Fox River/Green Bay Natural Resource Trustee Council approved funding to restore the hydrological



PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

*Refuge personnel fill ditch areas with soil to improve ecological value of the land for migratory birds and fish.*

conditions in approximately 200 acres of the refuge wetlands. Refuge personnel are filling or plugging the ditches using soil from the refuge lands. The shallow scrapes made from the borrow areas to fill the ditches will produce shallow wetland pools that are important for waterfowl and fish. Once the ditches are filled and no longer carry runoff directly to the

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river, the water will spread out as sheet-flow (flow of water that is spread out like a sheet over a large area), covering the whole area over the land and slowly filtering through the wet prairie, meadow and shallow marshy areas improving water quality in the Fox River. Adding water to the historic wetland areas will also stop the growth of the upland shrubs that are encroaching into the habitat.

“The wetland restoration will result in increasing water depth, duration of water on the wetland and frequency of flooding in drained areas, especially during the spring,” explained Sadie O’Dell, refuge wildlife biologist. “This creates habitat conditions important for fish spawning and nursery areas as well as for migratory birds such as mallards, greater sandhill cranes, American bittern, northern harrier and the yellow rail.”

Refuge managers are currently developing a recreational fishing plan for the Fox River NWR. The plan is expected to be completed for the 2008 fishing season. The refuge will be opened for the public to fish on Fox River backwater lakes and along the river’s edge. Fish species found on and along the refuge include channel catfish, northern pike, black crappie, bluegill, green sunfish, largemouth bass and pumpkinseed. Until the fishing plan is completed,

the refuge is open for deer hunting season only.

The natural resource trustees are comprised of FWS, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, Michigan Attorney General, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

For further information on natural resource damage assessment projects, contact Trustee Council Coordinator Colette Charbonneau, FWS, at [Colette\\_Charbonneau@fws.gov](mailto:Colette_Charbonneau@fws.gov) or at (920) 866-1726.



PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

*Sandhill cranes fly over wetlands that have been restored where native vegetation is growing.*

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# Little Lake Butte des Morts 2004, 2005 Summary Reports Available

By Greg Swanson, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Summaries of PCB cleanup work in Little Lake Butte des Morts (also known as operable unit 1) for 2004 and 2005 are now available. The remedial summary reports contain information on the project, dredging activity, dewatering, transportation and disposal, water treatment, productivity and environmental monitoring.

Copies of the reports can be found as PDF files in the "Reports and Documents" section of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Fox River Web page at <http://www.dnr.wi.gov/org/water/wm/foxriver/index.html>. They are also available in hard copy

or CD formats in the information repositories listed on page 7 as well as in the administrative records at the DNR offices in Green Bay and Madison and at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency office in Chicago.

The 2006 report is in progress. DNR expects to post the report to its Fox River Web page and send the document to the repositories and administrative records later this spring. More information on the Little Lake Butte des Morts cleanup can also be found at [www.littlelakecleanup.com](http://www.littlelakecleanup.com).

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## Public Comments, *from Page 1*

The proposed changes to the 2003 cleanup plan include:

- Dredging 3.7 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment from certain sections of the site
- Reducing the amount of material placed in a land-fill, by separating the sand from the sediment and using it on and off site
- Using sand covers as an alternative to dredging in certain areas
- Monitoring the caps and covers to ensure that the contamination left in place is not released

The proposed changes would result in lower PCB concentrations after the cleanup.

The proposed plan is explained in detail in documents

called the basis of design report and technical memorandum. They can be found in the site information repositories listed on Page 7 and online at [www.epa.gov/region5/sites/foxriver](http://www.epa.gov/region5/sites/foxriver) or in the "Reports and Documents" section at [www.dnr.wi.gov/org/water/wm/foxriver/index.html](http://www.dnr.wi.gov/org/water/wm/foxriver/index.html).

EPA will respond to public comments in a document called a responsiveness summary. The responsiveness summary will become part of the final decision document called the record of decision amendment. EPA's final cleanup plan will be announced in the local newspaper. Copies of the amendment will be available at the local information repositories and on the EPA and DNR Web pages listed above.

## Whoops!

We neglected to mention the location of the Gordon Nauman Conservation Area, the natural resource damage assessment project that was featured in the Winter 2006 Fox River Current.

The area is located in the village of Howard at the end of Wietor Drive which can be found just off Velp Drive right before the overpass at Interstate 43. It is near the existing fishing and boardwalk park known as Wietor Wharf.

Please visit this area that we are helping to restore!

## Information Available at Local Libraries

The Intergovernmental Partners invite the public to review technical reports, fact sheets and other documents related to the Lower Fox River cleanup at information repositories set up in the reference sections of the local libraries listed below. Information repositories at the public libraries in De Pere, Kaukauna, Little Chute, Neenah and Wrightstown have been discontinued. However, binders containing fact sheets are being maintained at these locations as well as at the following repositories:

- **Appleton Public Library**, 225 N. Oneida St., Appleton, Wis.; (920) 832-6170
- **Brown County Library**, 515 Pine St., Green Bay, Wis.; (920) 448-4381, Ext. 394
- **Door County Library**, 107 S. Fourth Ave., Sturgeon Bay, Wis.; (920) 743-6578
- **Oneida Community Library**, 201 Elm St., Oneida, Wis.; (920) 869-2210
- **Oshkosh Public Library**, 106 Washington Ave., Oshkosh, Wis.; (920) 236-5205

*An administrative record, which contains detailed information upon which the selection of the final site cleanup plan was based, is also available for review at two DNR offices: 801 E. Walnut St., Green Bay, Wis. and 101 S. Webster St., 2nd Floor, Madison, Wis. An administrative record is also available at the EPA Record Center, 77 W. Jackson Blvd., 7th Floor, Chicago, Ill.*



### *Check out these Web sites:*

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/wm/foxriver/index.html>

<http://www.epa.gov/region5/sites/foxriver/>

<http://contaminants.fws.gov/Issues/Restoration.cfm>

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/nrda/index.html>



Prepared by the Fox River Intergovernmental Partnership: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Supporting agencies include Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in these articles are solely those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by all members of the Fox River Intergovernmental Partnership.

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