

EPA, DNR to Change 2003 Cleanup Plan

By Susan Pastor, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

More capping and less dredging in the Lower Fox River is the new cleanup approach U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources were finalizing at press time. This plan was scheduled for release to the public by July.

Referred to as the amended record of decision, the plan replaces the original one approved by the agencies in 2003. Dredging will still be used to clean up PCB-contaminated sediment in about half of the areas in the river from Appleton to Green Bay. However, capping alone and capping combined with dredging or sand covers will allow the cleanup to be completed where dredging by itself would not be possible or practical.

“Engineered caps,” which are covers placed over sediment, could be used by themselves or with dredging if dredging alone proved to be insufficient. “They could be anywhere from 13 to 33 inches thick,” said EPA Remedial Project Manager Jim Hahnenberg. “These caps would be a combination of 6 to 15 inches of clean sand and 7 to 18 inches of large stones.” Caps within the navigational channel will be at least 33 inches thick while caps outside the channel will be closer to 13 inches thick.

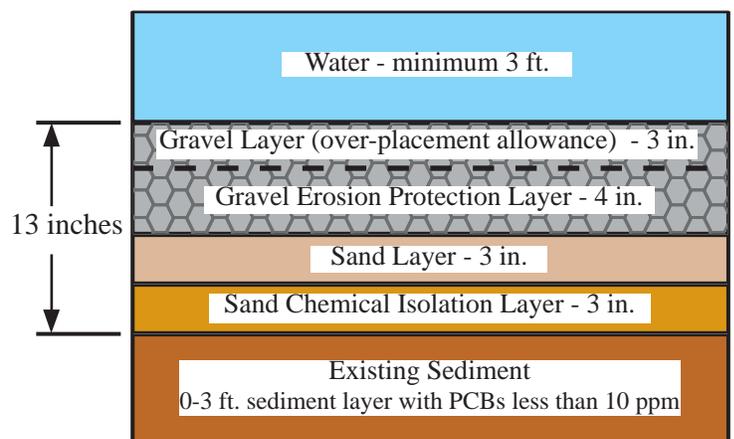
According to EPA and DNR, these engineered caps can be used near utilities, in areas where dredging would damage riverbanks, in areas with lower PCB levels, in areas more prone to scour, in the navigational channel from DePere to Green Bay, and in places where contaminated sediment is deeply buried.

Because capping would leave some of the contaminated sediment in place in some areas, the amended decision includes two main features that are designed to ensure that capping would protect the environment as well as dredging in the long term.

First, the caps will be designed to be very durable over time including during major floods, ice scour and boat propeller wash. Second, the new plan includes specific requirements for monitoring and maintaining any caps that are installed to ensure they remain in place and continue to be effective in containing PCBs.

All caps would be monitored on a regular basis or after natural or man-induced events take place that could possibly damage the caps. This monitoring will ensure that they stay intact while maintaining their ability to contain PCBs.

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COURTESY OF SHAW ENVIRONMENTAL

This diagram shows a 13-inch gravel armored cap. This is one of several cap designs that could be used in the Lower Fox River cleanup.

Cleanup Begins at DePere Dam, Continues in Little Lake Butte Des Morts This Summer

By Greg Swanson, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Cleanup of highly contaminated sediment in the area of the Lower Fox River just below the DePere Dam began this spring.

The cleanup, which will involve the removal of about 150,000 cubic yards of PCB-contaminated sediment, was announced by Gov. Jim Doyle, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Secretary Scott Hassett, state and local government officials and paper company representatives on Friday, April 20.

“Wisconsin is home to some of the most beautiful lakes, streams and scenery in the world,” the governor said. “We’ve worked hard to make sure this project is done right and as quickly as possible so that this region – and all of Wisconsin – will see the economic growth that a clean Fox River will bring.”

NCR Corp. and U.S. Paper Mills signed a legal agreement last year to design and implement the cleanup of the “hotspot” near the DePere Dam. The cleanup level that DNR and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is looking for is 1 part per million. The area to be cleaned up near the dam has PCBs as high as 3,000 ppm. Although this area contains the highest levels of PCBs in the river, it represents only about 2 percent of the contaminated sediment that needs to be cleaned up, but nearly 10 percent of the total PCB “mass.”

DNR representatives were on hand to explain the technical details of the project at a public information meeting in DePere on Wednesday, May 9. Held by both paper companies, the meeting focused on the schedule, dredging and dewatering processes, water treatment, transportation and disposal. Additional information on this project can be found online at <http://foxriverphase1.com>.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHAW ENVIRONMENTAL

Aerial view of Lower Fox River dredging area just below the DePere Dam.

Upriver in Little Lake Butte des Morts, the fourth season of cleanup work started in early April. This season, approximately 100,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment will be dredged and sand will be placed in certain areas where dredging has already been completed. Two dredges will be operating in several different locations during the summer. Maps showing the general locations of the dredges as they move about the lake during the summer and other information on this project can be found at www.littlelakecleanup.com.

Information on both projects can also be obtained by contacting DNR Project Coordinator Greg Hill at 608-267-9352; Gregory.Hill@wisconsin.gov or EPA Remedial Project Manager Jim Hahnenberg at 312-353-4213; hahnenberg.james@epa.gov.

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The proposed plan, which was commented on by nearly 600 people, was changed slightly based on public input. Changes include provisions in the river to maintain a sound monitoring program and evaluation plan as well as possible modifications due to changes in water levels. The cleanup plan for most of Green Bay remains unchanged from the 2003 decision.

The use of more caps as part of the cleanup lowers the cost by about \$200 million, however, cost was not the main reason the agencies decided to change their original decision. “Yes, it’s true the paper companies are looking at a ‘cheaper’ cleanup, however, we believe this new plan will allow us to oversee a more customized approach,” Hahnenberg explained. “There are many smaller areas in the river that we now know will not accommodate a dredge. Dredging will often use in-water pipelines or some other method to carry the material downstream to the staging areas where the sediment would be separated from the water.”

Once that separation process is completed, the treated or cleansed sediment will be trucked to a landfill licensed to accept hazardous waste. Depending on how hazardous it is, the sediment will be taken to a landfill in Chilton, Wis. or to a facility near Detroit.

“We realize that our decision to go with more capping and less dredging is unpopular with many people in the Green Bay area, but we think this is a better option based on our design work that has been ongoing since 2003,” Hahnenberg concluded. “This new plan will clean up the river much quicker than what was outlined four years ago.”

The amended record of decision document will be available at the information repositories and administrative record locations listed below and will be posted online at www.epa.gov/region5/sites/foxriver.



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:

April

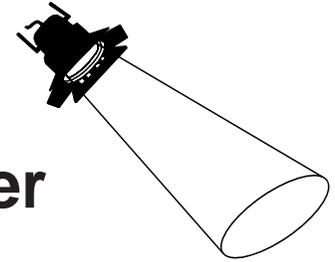
- ◆ *Colette Charbonneau, FWS:* Department of the Interior Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration annual workshop, Phoenix, AZ; cooperative restoration.

May

- ◆ *Jim Hahnenberg, EPA:* National Association of Remedial Project Managers annual conference, Baltimore, MD; Lower Fox River proposed plan.

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

Spotlight On: Preserving Baird Creek Headwater Wetlands



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

The Baird Creek Preservation Foundation recently bought 22 acres of wetlands in the headwaters of Baird Creek. The Fox River/Green Bay Natural Resource Trustee Council funded this along with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources from the Knowles-Nelson State Stewardship Fund. The foundation only used a portion of the natural resource damage assessment restoration settlement funding initially approved by the trustee council in 2005 for the current purchase.

Project Coordinator Paul Abrahams said, "This is the initial step in a planned larger project to preserve these wetlands for their wildlife habitat. Preservation of this critical habitat will also help protect water quality and the hydrological stability of Baird Creek."

Rapid development of the city of Green Bay on its eastern boundary is creating problems for Baird Creek and its supporting wetlands. In 2003, DNR found that the stream suffers from nonpoint source pollution including erosion from construction sites, barnyard runoff, stream bank and cropland erosion causing murky waters and nutrient problems as well as soil settling out of the water which could cover fish and aquatic insect habitat. Baird Creek was placed on the state-impaired waters list in 2006 due to these nutrient and sediment contributions from the surrounding landscape.



PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

The headwater wetlands in Baird Creek protect the creek from runoff from nearby farm areas such as the one shown on this photo (behind the wetland on the far right).

Baird Creek is a tributary to the Lower Fox River through the East River. The foundation is currently concentrating on preserving critical headwater wetlands in the townships of Eaton and Humboldt. It will continue to search for other headwater wetlands on properties whose owners are willing to preserve this habitat. Wetland complexes in these areas are important for reducing nutrient and sediment runoff into Baird Creek, as well as providing nesting sites and resting areas for shorebirds, songbirds and waterfowl.

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The natural resource trustees are comprised of DNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 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 or 920-866-1726.

Trustee Council Approves Two New Restoration Projects

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

The Fox River/Green Bay Natural Resource Trustee Council recently approved two new fishery-based projects along the west shore of Green Bay.

These projects, which were among several submitted to the council late last year, will be done by Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. They were selected because council members determined that projects to enhance fishery resources and near-shore and stream habitat quality were lacking relative to the goals outlined in their 2003 joint restoration plan.

Northern Pike Habitat Restoration—West Shore of Green Bay

The majority of the aquatic and near-shore habitat areas of Green Bay have been lost or degraded. These areas served as homes to many fish species including yellow perch, spotted muskellunge, and northern pike for spawning and rearing their young. Restoring these areas will help to improve spawning success and the potential survival of these important native fish.

Restoration will also benefit wildlife (waterfowl and marsh birds) and aquatic life in these areas and help to filter sediment and nutrients caused by runoff that may enter the bay. The project will remove berms along a drainage ditch through DNR-owned lands to restore water flow to and through the wetland near the

ditch. Water depth in the ditch will be maintained in the spring to allow northern pike to pass into upstream spawning areas into the enhanced wetland.

Habitat Protection in Rush Point Unit—Green Bay West Shore Wildlife Area

This restoration project will protect about 40 acres of critical areas along the west shore of Green Bay where increasing development is resulting in habitat loss. The area includes wetlands that connect to the bay through common waterways. As a result of increased public awareness of the importance of wetlands and associated habitats along the west shore, this project offers a unique opportunity to protect them. This area has been identified as a significant place for waterfowl nesting and resting areas as well as for fish spawning.

These projects are being paid from a fund established in 2004 by Fort James/Georgia-Pacific for the preservation and restoration of northern pike habitat.

The natural resource trustees are comprised of DNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 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.

Brown County Receives Staffing Grant

By Colette Charbonneau, Fish and Wildlife Service

Northern pike habitat restoration is underway in the Suamico/Little Suamico watershed thanks to a \$60,000 grant to the Brown County Land Conservation Department.

The grant was awarded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation on April 4 at the L.H. Barkhausen Waterfowl Preserve, Suamico. It will be used to pay staff members to run the county's new project. Two part-time employees have already been hired using the NFWF grant funds. They started work in early June and will be contacting village of Suamico landowners who have stream and/or wetland areas on their properties.

"The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant is going to provide much needed funding to the county to hire staff specifically for the pike habitat restoration project," stated Jim Jolly, Brown County Land Conservation Department program manager. "The project will provide many benefits to Green Bay and we are excited to move forward with the project."

Restoration supporters Neal Feeken, NFWF assistant director at the central partnership office, and U.S. Rep. Steve Kagen were present when the grant was awarded.

The Fox River/Green Bay Natural Resource Trustee Council awarded \$200,000 to the conservation department in 2005 to build some buffer areas along

intermittent and perennial streams in the Suamico and Little Suamico watersheds that have high potential for northern pike spawning and rearing areas. The establishment of permanent conservation easements will reduce sediment, nutrients and pesticides entering into streams from cropland. This will protect spawning habitat and quality plankton production areas needed for feeding young pike. The project will also improve adult pike access to upstream spawning and rearing habitat sites. This latest grant, which was needed to pay the new staff members, supplements the trustee council's award.

If you live in this area and are interested in the restoration project, contact the Brown County Land Conservation Department at 920-391-4620. For general information, go to www.co.brown.wi.us/Parks/parks.



PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Trustee Council representatives Charlie Wooley (left) and Paul Ninham (center) discuss the \$60,000 restoration grant award with U.S. Rep. Steve Kagen.

EPA, DNR Attend Congressman's Meeting

By Gary Kincaid, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources were represented at a special informational meeting sponsored by U.S. Rep. Steve Kagen.

The meeting, which was held on Saturday, May 5 in Green Bay, drew about 100 people. The congressman held the meeting so his concerns could be addressed

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regarding the agencies' proposal to amend their original cleanup decision for the Lower Fox River. That decision was made in 2003.

Kagen said he questions whether capping will be an effective long-term solution to the PCB contamination in the river's sediment. He also has concerns about Green Bay's navigational channel. In addition to the congressman's concerns, the audience heard presentations by invited panelists including EPA Remedial Project Manager Jim Hahnenberg and DNR Project Coordinator Greg Hill. "If compelling new

information comes forward at this time, it will be considered in our final decision," Hahnenberg said.

About two hours of comments and questions followed the presentations. While many audience members echoed the congressman's concerns, others raised different issues relating to storm-related events and erosion, health studies, and sediment disposal and treatment options.

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



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>

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.



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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Fox River Current is published quarterly by the Fox River Intergovernmental Partnership. Its purpose is to provide up-to-date information about cleanup and restoration efforts on the Lower Fox River. Call Greg Swanson at 608-264-6024 to request a subscription or alternative format. Feedback on articles and ideas for future issues are welcome. Send comments to Greg Swanson, *Fox River Current*, DNR, CE/8, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707 or e-mail <gregory.swanson@wisconsin.gov>



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