

Sediment removal to continue without delays

By Susan Pastor, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BOLDT TEAM

Collecting sediment samples under the U.S. Highway 172 bridge.

Sediment removal in the Lower Fox River is in full swing and should remain that way thanks to a recent federal court decision.

The cleanup, which has stopped and started over the past four years, will be completed without interruption due to a recent federal court decision. In May, Judge William C. Griesbach ordered NCR Corp., and several other paper companies responsible for the river's PCB contamination, to clean up the river without further delays.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Remedial Project Manager Jim Hahnenberg, this ruling means there will no longer be the annual concerns over if and when the

cleanup will start. "Now we can focus on the cleanup itself rather than on the uncertainty of the schedule," he stated.

The cleanup has been proceeding smoothly since it resumed in April, he added. At press time, about 2.7 million cubic yards had been dredged, squeezed, dried and trucked away.

NCR's contractors have been working upstream from the Georgia-Pacific plant in Green Bay moving downstream toward the mouth of the river at Green Bay. Four 8-inch hydraulic dredges have been running 24 hours per day, five days a week, Hahnenberg explained. "We expect to

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Trustee council hosts workshops to discuss future goals

By Betsy M. Galbraith, Trustee Council Coordinator

The Fox River Natural Resource Trustee Council hosted several workshops this spring to discuss conservation goals and explore future restoration project opportunities with its partners.

The objective of the workshops, in which over 18 conservation organizations participated, was to find common ground between Fox River Natural Resource Damage Assessment restoration goals and partner goals to benefit the Lower Fox River/Green Bay ecosystem. A wide range of projects were explored including land preservation, wetland and stream restoration, recreational and fisheries projects.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BETSY M. GALBRAITH

Conservation organization representatives discuss projects.

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Federal court experience from a different perspective

By Susan Pastor, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

When I heard the Lower Fox River case was going to be heard in a federal courtroom in Milwaukee, I made plans to go.

It's not often that I get a chance to see attorneys from the U.S. Department of Justice represent the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This time, they were going to appear 90 minutes from the EPA's Chicago office. Our team had been preparing for several months and I wasn't going to miss it.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SUSAN PASTOR

Entrance to federal courthouse in Milwaukee.

Although we couldn't be there every day for the three-week trial, EPA Remedial Project Manager Jim Hahnenberg and I wanted to be there on the first day. We made the easy drive north on Interstate 94 arriving in plenty of time to go through security and get good seats in the gallery with the rest of the onlookers.

The case involved NCR Corp. and six other paper companies determined to be potentially responsible for PCB contamination in the river. Their attorneys, as well as the government's legal team, came prepared to present witnesses before Judge William C. Griesbach. This judge had made previous rulings pertaining to the Lower Fox River, so he seemed to be familiar with the attorneys on both sides. Even so, everyone was very respectful and kept to their business at hand.

This was my first chance to see our legal team, comprised of seven attorneys from U.S. DOJ and Wisconsin DOJ, in action. On day one, Jeff Spector and Kristin Furrrie from U.S. DOJ did most of the talking.

Unlike my favorite television court dramas in which witnesses are questioned, evidence is presented and decisions are made in an hour or less, this went on for several hours. I actually knew two of the day's witnesses—an EPA upper level manager and a health expert from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. On the EPA side, questions were fielded about the various technical decisions made to clean up the river based on years of studies done in all five of the segments. When questioned by the paper companies' counsel, the EPA witness acknowledged that "NCR and API have contributed and have been active" in the cleanup so far.

Health-related questions centered on the need for a cleanup since advisories alone aren't enough to resolve hazards to the public, according to the ATSDR representative. "Exposure to the Lower Fox River could cause adverse health effects," she stated. "PCBs are in the sediment, fish take in the sediment, and people eat the fish."

My colleagues impressed me. I have never actually seen people I know on a witness stand. I admired their ability to keep cool, calm and collected as they relied on their vast knowledge and years of experience to answer questions from both sides of the courtroom. I assumed the pressure was on—but it didn't show—at least not to me.

After lunch, a long afternoon of questions aimed at an expert in river sediment movement rounded out the day. When court was adjourned around 4 p.m., Hahnenberg and I headed for home. We had a lively discussion in the car as we reflected on our day in court. Although we wouldn't be returning the next day, it was fun to speculate on what might happen and what we would miss.

While we enjoyed our drive home and stop for dinner, we assumed the legal teams' evening was not so leisurely. We pictured attorneys in their business suits locking themselves in their hotel rooms, eating from boxes containing "take-out food," and preparing for their next day in front of the judge—just like on TV.

Boater, angler safety still top concern near dredges

By Susan Pastor, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

With boating and fishing seasons in full swing, everyone should be aware of the dredges that are digging up PCB-contaminated sediment in the Lower Fox River.

While dredging has been ongoing for four months, boaters and anglers shouldn't get too complacent if they find themselves near one of three dredges or the capping plant where equipment used for spreading sand and gravel is located. Contractors, who are in the water Monday through Saturday, urge recreational users to heed the warnings.

According to Assistant Environmental Division Manager Greg Smith, J.F. Brennan Co., boaters should heed the safety warnings. "We compare this to a highway construction zone," he said. "Slow down, abide by the signs, stay between the red and green buoys, and don't wander off near our pipes by the channel. Those who speed in the dredging areas can cause damage to their boats, to our pipeline, or somebody could get hurt."

Smith said he doesn't know of any accidents so far, but a few people have had their boats turned around. "You always have some who venture out past the buoys or don't understand the markings," he added.

Smith attributes the clean track record to Brennan's proactive boat safety patrol, which targets boaters as they are putting their crafts into the water. "Most people

are very receptive and very appreciative," Smith said. "Just because there is water doesn't mean there is safe passage. You can't always see our pipes because they float up and down. What looked safe yesterday may not be safe today."

Dredging began next to the DePere Dam and the U.S. Highway 172 bridge in Green Bay in April and is scheduled to run through November. NCR Corp. currently is paying for most of the cleanup. J.F Brennan Co. is doing the dredging work.

Further information on boater and angler safety can be found at www.foxrivercleanup.com.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BOLDT TEAM

Warning sign for boaters along the Lower Fox River.

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. To request a speaker, please contact the agency directly or Susan Pastor, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator, at 312-353-1325 or 800-621-8431, Ext. 31325, or via email at pastor.susan@epa.gov.

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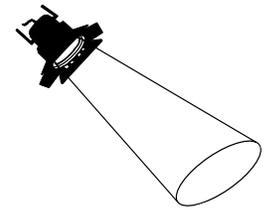
- ◆ *Betsy Galbraith*, FWS: Lake Michigan Area Land & Water Conservation Association, Bellevue; Natural Resource Damage Assessment restoration presentation.

The Fox River Current is featuring Natural Resource Damage Assessment projects in and near the Lower Fox River.

Spotlight On:

Sensiba State Wildlife Area Northern Pike Spawning and Waterfowl Enhancement Project

By Betsy Galbraith, Fox River/Green Bay NRDA Trustee Council Coordinator



Located on the western shore of lower Green Bay in northern Brown County, the Sensiba Wildlife Area is directly north of Long Tail Point. The wildlife area is located along a critical historic migration route for waterfowl, shorebirds and birds of prey. As part of the larger Green Bay West Shores Wildlife Area, it was named after Lucille Sensiba who donated the land to the Wisconsin Conservation Department in 1949.

“Sensiba is an amazing place to see ducks in the spring and fall,” said James Harbaugh, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources wildlife technician. “Red heads, canvas backs, green wing teal, blue wing teal, mallards and black ducks are some of the different types of waterfowl you’ll see migrating through.”

Sensiba is unique because it contains the only resting area in Brown County closed to hunting. In the spring, the reservoir at Sensiba collects warm runoff water, providing one of the first areas accessible to waterfowl that are migrating along the Green Bay shoreline.



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE SEILO, PHOTODYNAMIX

Aerial view of the Sensiba Wildlife Area in spring 2013, with most construction activities completed.

These important coastal wetlands have been a cornerstone of waterfowl habitat for Green Bay since the late 1950s when the reservoir was created. Two small straightened streams that fed into the Sensiba’s wetlands were cut off from the bay to provide water for the reservoir.

The productivity of these wetlands has decreased greatly in recent years due to an aging wetland management infrastructure of dikes, a pump and water-level control structures. Invasive plants had also spread throughout the wetlands, leading to expansive areas of non-native cattails and giant reed grass. This shift in the wetland plant community means lower quality habitat for fish and wildlife.

After recognizing these negative changes at Sensiba, project partners including the Wisconsin DNR, Ducks Unlimited and The Nature Conservancy developed a restoration plan. The enhancements included upgrading the failing infrastructure and reconnecting an isolated stream within Sensiba to the Bay for pike spawning.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WISCONSIN DNR

Construction activities at Sensiba Wildlife Area in fall 2012.

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The dynamic and changing nature of Green Bay's coastal wetlands were also considered in the long-term project design. Project engineers and biologists studied the entire watershed to better understand changing water levels and seasonal fluctuations.

"By taking a holistic approach and studying the entire watershed, our restoration efforts offer long-term improvements for not only waterfowl and fish, but also a host of other things such as frogs, birds and insects," stated Harbaugh.

Several hundred acres of land near the western boundary of the Sensiba Wildlife Area were recently purchased as a wetland mitigation site by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to compensate for wetlands adversely affected by local highway construction projects. A wetland restoration project has also been completed on this site and efforts are underway to reconnect a former stream channel with Sensiba to offer more opportunities for northern pike migration and spawning.

The project was supported by the Lower Fox River/Green Bay Natural Resource Trustee Council through Natural Resource Damage Assessment settlement funds. Other partner funds were contributed by the Wisconsin DNR, Ducks Unlimited through a private foundation gift, Wisconsin duck stamp revenues, and a grant awarded to The Nature Conservancy and Ducks Unlimited from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

The natural resource trustees include the Wisconsin DNR, Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

For more information about Lower Fox River/Green Bay NRDA projects, contact Betsy M. Galbraith, trustee council coordinator, at betsy_galbraith@fws.gov or 920-866-1753.

Wisconsin DNR relaxes fish advisories

The Lower Fox River cleanup may be why the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources was able to reduce some fish consumption advisories.

The latest round of testing for chemicals, including PCBs and mercury, showed that the levels are down in some fish. The Wisconsin DNR started advising people in early August that they can eat some of the fish, including white bass, more often. People may now eat as many as six fish meals annually for Green Bay and for the Lower Fox River from DePere downstream to the mouth at Green Bay.

More information can be found at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/fishing/consumption>.

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An additional benefit of the workshops was discussion about collaboration among the organizations for restoration projects. "When we share project ideas, we often realize we can work together to accomplish projects that are larger in size, scope and conservation impact," said Nicole Van Helden, director of conservation for the Green Bay Watershed for The Nature Conservancy. "The workshop was an opportunity to coordinate partnership efforts that will help restore the health of the Fox River and Green Bay watershed."

Workshop participants also had the opportunity to learn from each other about conservation strategies and

restoration techniques. "The meeting provided us such a great opportunity to learn more about the entire Green Bay watershed and how the work we are doing in Door County connects with the restoration work being done on the western shores of Green Bay," noted Terrie Cooper, land program director for the Door County Land Trust.

The trustee council intends to continue hosting partner workshops annually. If your conservation organization works within northeast Wisconsin and would like to participate in a future workshop, contact Betsy Galbraith, trustee council coordinator, at betsy_galbraith@fws.gov or 920-866-1753.

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see at least 18,000 cubic yards of sediment removed each week,” he added. “And, that is a lot of sediment.”

Hahnenberg also said it appears the cleanup is on schedule to meet this year’s goal to remove 575,000 cubic yards of sediment by mid-November. “If the weather cooperates, we should meet our goal,” said Hahnenberg. “We were half way home by early August.”

Sand capping and covering, which resumed in 2011, will continue this year. Covering involves placing a layer of sand over contaminated sediment while capping includes a layer of sand covered by a layer of stone. Hahnenberg explained, “The original goal for this season, to cap 25 acres and cover nine acres of sediment, is still attainable.”

After all of the sediment is dredged, it is pumped into the State Street dewatering facility through a pipeline. As in the past, the water is squeezed out of the sediment by special equipment called a plate and frame press. The

remaining dried sediment is loaded onto a truck so it can be hauled away and properly disposed of.

A couple of disposal options are being used. Sediment with low levels of PCBs can be taken to a nearby landfill while some sediment with higher levels will be trucked to Ridgeview Recycling and Disposal Facility in Whitelaw. This landfill, owned by Waste Management of Wisconsin, received a permit last year from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to accept this type of material. This is the first year Lower Fox River sediment will be taken to Ridgeview.

“Sediment with PCB levels over 50 parts per million is considered to be ‘highly contaminated’ so it will be taken to the new location,” Hahnenberg continued. “Most of the sediment has PCB levels less than 50 ppm, so it continues to be trucked to Veolia Hickory Meadows Landfill in Chilton.”

As in previous years, truck traffic is coordinated with the local communities, including Wrightstown and Hilbert.

New public affairs manager covers Fox from new angle

By Susan Pastor, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

For 22 years, “By Ed Culhane” was a familiar byline above Lower Fox River articles in *The Post-Crescent*, Appleton’s daily newspaper. Today, he still covers the river and other local topics but from a different vantage point.

As the newest communications specialist/public affairs manager for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Culhane is the “go-to” guy for outreach in the northeast part of the state. Having left the Fox Valley area in 2006, Culhane, 62, is back home. He once again lives and works in Appleton and checks in weekly at the Wisconsin DNR’s Green Bay office.

Looking at “semi retirement” seven years ago, Culhane left his staff writer position at the daily newspaper to take a similar position at a twice weekly publication. But after 14 months with the *Minocqua Lakeland Times*, he decided to switch gears altogether.

“Things were changing dramatically with newspapers,” he said. “Staffs were shrinking.”



Ed Culhane

So in 2008, he applied for the public affairs manager position in the Wisconsin DNR’s Eau Claire office. “I had reported on the DNR and always admired and respected what they did,” he added.

For the past five years, he’s actually been doing what “they” did. “I spent a whole day in Eau Claire with a bear we kept isolated in a wood lot,” he explained. “My job was to confront the bear when it tried to take off, raise my arms and turn it back into a wooded area. Another day, I was on a bear den visit when the mother was anesthetized. I held a cub in my coat to keep it warm.”

As a member of Wisconsin DNR’s incident management team, Culhane serves as a public information officer

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as he did this past May when he worked on an 8,000-acre forest fire, which burned for five days in Douglas County. It was the largest forest fire in the Northwoods in 33 years. “The DNR’s incident command center coordinated the efforts of more than 40 fire departments as well as DNR wildfire crews,” he continued. “The National Guard sent two Blackhawk firefighters to help with water drops and we were assisted by a CL415 Water Bomber from Canada.”

Sometimes it’s a desk job, the Illinois native stated, when he takes calls from citizens and reporters and is entrenched in social media such as Facebook and YouTube. Other times, he is back in the field. “The other day, I was with a biologist hunting for rattlesnakes,” he stated.

Culhane sees the similarities, as well as differences, between being a member of the media and a member of the Wisconsin DNR staff. “As a reporter, I usually

worked independently chasing stories and meeting deadlines,” he explained. “But, now I’m part of a team that tells stories to advance the department’s mission.” Culhane, who holds bachelor’s degrees in English and journalism from the University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire, enjoyed covering many outdoor activities over the years. During his tenure at *The Post-Crescent*, this also included the Lower Fox River cleanup.

“I worked intensely on the Lower Fox River and was the primary reporter on this story for 15 years,” he said. “I knew all of the players—EPA, DNR and the paper companies. It introduced me to the scope of the cleanup.” As a Wisconsin DNR communicator, Culhane is now part of the team of agencies and tribes working on cleanup and restoration.

He concluded, “I always thought I would be with the Fox cleanup until the end.”

Information available at local libraries

The Fox River Intergovernmental Partnership invites the public to review technical reports, fact sheets, newsletters and other documents related to the Lower Fox River cleanup at information repositories set up in the reference sections of the Wisconsin libraries listed below.

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

In addition, fact sheets and newsletters only are maintained at the public libraries in De Pere, Kaukauna, Little Chute, Neenah and Wrightstown.

An Administrative Record, which contains detailed information upon which the selection of the cleanup plans was based, is available at:



Check out these websites:

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

<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/greatlakes/greenbay.html>

<http://contaminants.fws.gov/issues/restoration.cfm>

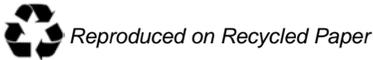
<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/es/ec/nrda/index.html>

<http://www.foxrivernrda.org>

- **Wisconsin DNR**, Northeast Regional Office, 2984 Shawano Ave., Green Bay
- **Wisconsin DNR**, Bureau of Watershed Management, 101 S. Webster St., 3rd Floor, Madison
- **Appleton Public Library**, 225 N. Oneida St., Appleton
- **Brown County Library**, 515 Pine St., Green Bay
- **EPA Record Center**, 77 W. Jackson Blvd., 7th Floor, Chicago



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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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