



Sheboygan River and Harbor Natural Resource Damage Assessment

What is Natural Resource Damage Assessment?

The goal of Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) is to restore natural resources that have been injured by the release of hazardous substances. Through the NRDA process, trustee agencies measure the harm to natural resources and determine the type and amount of environmental restoration required to compensate the public for those impacts.

The trustees for the Sheboygan River are

- U.S. Dept. of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- U.S. Dept. of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

The trustees collect and evaluate data to identify the natural resources that have been injured by contamination and to quantify the injuries. For example, injuries might include increased tumor rates in fish or reduced prey available for fish to eat. Once the injuries are known, trustees work with the public to select projects that will address the injuries. For example, this might include creating or enhancing wetlands that will provide foraging areas for fish. Trustees seek funding for or implementation of these restoration projects from the parties responsible for the contamination.



Photo: Jessica Winter, NOAA

Dredging removed contaminated sediment from this area of the Sheboygan River in 2011

How have hazardous substances injured natural resources in and around the Sheboygan River?

The site is comprised of the lower 14 miles of the Sheboygan River and the adjacent floodplains. Throughout the 20th century, industrial facilities released hazardous chemicals including PCBs, PAHs, metals, and other chemicals into the river and adjacent floodplains. These chemicals have been measured in sediments and in fish at concentrations high enough to cause injury to the natural resources. The contamination has also limited the public's ability to use and enjoy the Sheboygan River: for example, PCB contamination has required limitations on consumption of fish and waterfowl.



How does Natural Resource Damage Assessment relate to cleanup?

Remedial dredging for the upper reach of the river was conducted in 2007. Multiple remedial dredging projects for the lower river and harbor were conducted in 2011 and 2012. EPA also removed contaminated soil from the floodplains adjacent to the river in 2012.

The trustees are coordinating with the cleanup agencies to share data and information. The remedial process and the NRDA have different focuses: the remedial process is intended to address the risk posed by the contamination, while the goal of the NRDA is to restore the natural resources to their baseline condition and to compensate for past injuries to the natural resources.

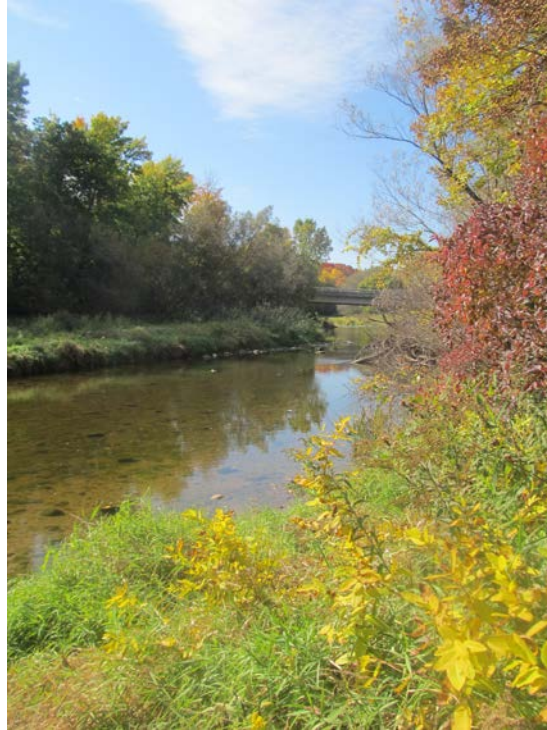


Photo: Betsy Galbraith, USFWS

What is the current status of the damage assessment?

In 2012, the trustees undertook a preliminary assessment of information on sediments, soils, water, invertebrates, fish, birds, mammals, and reptiles in the Sheboygan River to determine whether it is reasonable to pursue a damage assessment.

The Preassessment Screen (available at the website below) documents this work. The trustees concluded that injury to these resources was likely and that damage assessment is warranted.

The next step will be the trustees' development of an Assessment Plan that will describe the methods that will be used to quantify damages. Trustees will invite the public to comment on the Assessment Plan.

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For Additional Information:

Administrative Record website hosting case documents:

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

Further information on NRDA:

<http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/environmental-restoration/natural-resource-damage-assessment.html>