

Illinois' Lake Michigan shoreline habitat gets a landmark boost.

The New Coast Guard



Story By Todd Main
Photos By Alex Parrent

In December 2010, Governor Quinn announced a major protection program for Illinois' portion of Lake Michigan through the creation of the Illinois Coastal Management Program.

Created by Executive Order 10-14, the CMP is a partnership with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration that will provide

up to \$2 million in federal support to preserve, protect, restore, and, where possible, enhance coastal resources in Illinois for this and succeeding generations. The program also will seek to improve the quality of decision-making by the state and coastal communities resulting in more effective outcomes.

Through the Coastal Management Program, Illinois will receive federal funding for the preservation, protection, restoration and enhancement of the state's coastal resources.

Program priorities

Over the last two centuries, Illinois' coast has undergone nearly a complete metamorphosis. We have modified its hydrology, developed the infrastructure that supports a world-class industrial and transportation center, and invented the skyscrapers that today grace our shoreline. With all these changes, it is remarkable that our coastal resources still contain some of the richest, rarest and most diverse complex of plant and

Illinois coastal counties are home to 6 million people, with an estimated growth to 6.8 million by 2030.



animal species and natural habitat areas in the state.

The environmental legacy of our industrial sites, and the needs and demands of a growing and vibrant urban community, create an intricate set of issues to balance as we invest in programs that seek to restore our ecosystems and meet the increasing demands for open space, recreation and public access.

The new program will address the following areas:

- **Invasive species.** The CMP will include mitigation and long-term, sustainable solutions to terrestrial invasive species. Strategies for controlling aquatic invasive species will focus on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal and controlling movement between the Illinois River and Lake Michigan basins.
- **Habitat, ecosystems and natural area restoration.** The CMP will focus on undeveloped portions of shoreline in Cook and Lake counties immediately north of Chicago to the Wisconsin state line and south of Chicago to the Indiana state line. These areas include: North Point Marina and Adeline Jay Geo-Karis Illinois Beach State Park (including the Dead River and Kellogg Creek watersheds), Waukegan Beach, the Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Spring Bluff Forest Preserve, and wooded ravines along the Lake Michigan bluffs. The Chicago River and North Shore Channel corridors and Wilmette Harbor include important habitats. The Little Calumet and Grand Calumet River corridors, as well as Lake Calumet and Calumet River

More than 20 million people visit our Lake Michigan shoreline annually.

and their surrounding wetland areas also will be addressed. These important habitat areas contain some of the most degraded industrial sites.

- **Areas of concern.** Waukegan Harbor is the only designated Area of Concern in Illinois. Six of 14 use impairments have been identified, including restrictions on fish and wildlife consumption, benthos degradation, restrictions on dredging, beach closings, degradation of phytoplankton populations and loss of fish and wildlife habitat. A priority list will be developed for



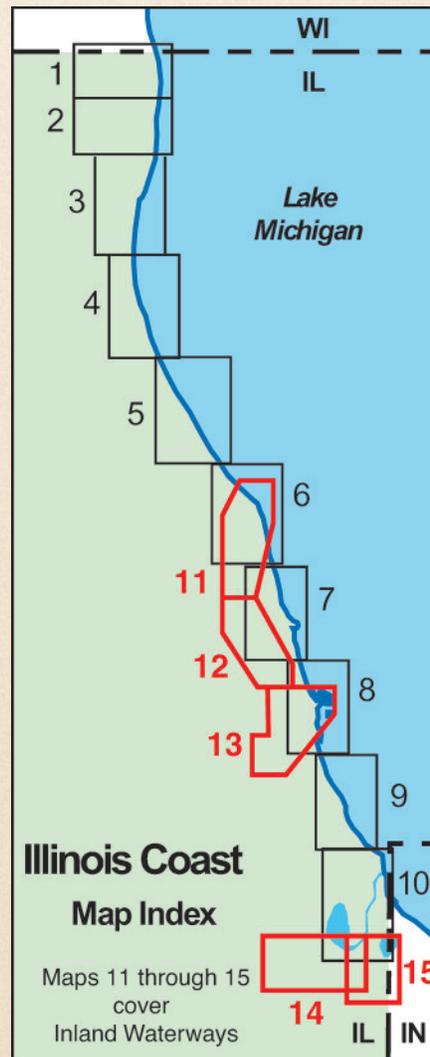
Expanded use of Green infrastructures, such as the rooftop gardens shown above and lower left, will aid in storm-water control.

projects in Waukegan Harbor, Waukegan Lakefront and the Waukegan River Watershed.

- **Persistent bio-accumulative toxins.** Toxic issues in northeastern Illinois generally are legacy issues from our industrial past. Most are well documented and concentrated in the river sediments, brownfield areas and Superfund sites. Site-specific strategies for each property will be developed as well as priorities for long-term restoration, as appropriate.
- **Sustainable development.** The CMP will focus on the development of strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change, including reducing individual carbon footprints, and expanding the use of our natural resources to act as carbon sinks.

Areas within the CMP include

1. Illinois Beach North;
2. Illinois Beach South;
3. Waukegan;
4. Lake Forest;
5. Glencoe;
6. Evanston;
7. Montrose;
8. Chicago Loop;
9. Jackson Park;
10. Calumet;
11. North Shore Chicago;
12. North Branch;
13. Main South Branch;
14. Calumet Park;
- and, 15. Grand Calumet.





(Photo by Adele Hoode.)

The Coastal Management Program is driven by the increased demand for open space, recreation and public access.

- **Non-point source pollution.** Non-point source pollution is primarily related to storm-water management which, for the most part, is managed, treated and ultimately discharged away from the Lake Michigan Basin. Despite the investment of billions of dollars over decades, basement flooding and diversions of untreated sewage into Lake Michigan are not uncommon across the region. The program will facilitate discussions of expanding the use of Green infrastructure to control stormwater, promote groundwater recharge and reduce flooding.
- **Information and indicators.** The CMP will identify existing and ongoing data collections and indicators, identify data gaps, develop priorities for future data-collection efforts and assist in the collaborative development of sustainability indicators.

Coastal communities will benefit from resources available through the CMP.

Local and state agencies and non-profit organizations will be eligible to apply for and receive funds. Examples

Lake Michigan provides drinking water to nearly 7 million Illinois residents—more than half of the state's population.

of how other states/communities have used these funds include:

- low-cost construction projects such as dune walkovers and boat launches
- planning and creation of beach access points

- reinvigorating economically depressed waterfront areas
- preventing and monitoring beach erosion
- providing technical assistance on shore protection and bluff stabilization
- providing assistance for local planning in coastal areas

The types of activities that can be funded are broadly defined and will be left to the creativity of eligible applicants, as long as the goals of the CMP are addressed and the projects are located within the CMP boundary. 

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Additional Coastal Management Program Priorities

Public access and recreation

Illinois' shoreline is increasingly used for recreation. The demand for public access to Lake Michigan and recreational resources has outstripped the supply and there always will be a need for expanded and improved recreational facilities and services. The CMP will provide technical and financial assistance to acquire, add to or improve public recreational sites and facilities.

Economic development

Our coastal communities are essential components of a strong Illinois economy. Assistance to these communities will be provided to improve management programs and support efforts to identify and designate areas well-suited for economic development of port and waterfront areas. Technical and financial assistance in the regional planning process for energy transmission and transportation routes also will be provided.

Climate change

Climate models project a decline in ice cover, and a greater rate of evaporation in the Great Lakes, causing a drop in the level of Lake Michigan. These changes will affect ecosystems, water quality, water supply and navigation. Warmer water temperatures and increased run-off from higher intensity rainstorms will increase the risk of water-borne diseases. The CMP will provide support to projects focused on adaptation to the effects of climate change in northeast Illinois.

For further information on the Illinois Coastal Management Program, visit www.dnr.illinois.gov/cmp/Pages/default.aspx.