



CLEAN BAY BACKERS

Clean Bay Backers is a diverse group of public, private and non-profit members who act as the Citizen Advisory Committee to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for the Lower Green Bay and Fox River Area of Concern. We represent the community's interest in creating a better future by restoring the health of the Lower Fox River and Green Bay.

“Our family moved to the bay in 1971 because of the wildlife, beauty of the area and possibility of swimming again at Bay Beach. Decades later, we are still working hard to preserve and bring back these great assets.”

*Kathy Lefebvre,
East Shore Drive Neighborhood Association*

Creating a **better future** for our communities by restoring the health of the

Fox River & bay of Green Bay

As a source of water, food, jobs and recreation, the Fox River and Green Bay have long fueled the region's development and economy. Prior to the 1970s, untreated sewage and industrial wastes were often dumped directly into the river. This contaminated the sediment of the Fox River in many areas.



Families enjoying the Fox River.
Erin Hanson photo



Clean-up is underway, but big challenges still remain, including polluted runoff, lost wetlands and non-native plant and animal invasions. Addressing these problems is critical, so the river and bay can provide healthy habitat and re-development opportunities.

Look inside to learn more ➔

Northern pike ice fishing catch on Green Bay. *Chad Stellmacher photo*



Kayaking the lower bay. Erin Hanson photo

Community partnerships have helped make a difference!

“The restoration of the Cat Islands is a win-win that demonstrates the economic and environmental benefits of reusing dredge material.”

*Dean Haen, Director
Brown County Port & Resource
Recovery Department*

The costs of pollution into our waterways include risks to our health, lost tourism and recreation, decreased property values and a lowered quality of life.

Costs of water pollution:

- Harmful algae blooms that make water unsafe for swimming or drinking and cause dead zones in the bay of Green Bay
- Contaminated fish that are unsafe to eat
- Mucky, smelly, unusable public beaches
- Expensive dredging and disposal of river sediments
- Diminished beauty and recreation
- Lost fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities



From 2009-2013, dredging removed enough material to send **an average of 33 dump trucks each day** to the landfill. The Lower Fox project is the **largest PCB cleanup in the world.**



In 2014, Brown County recorded over **30,000 Northern Pike young fry** that hatched in ditches and wetlands on the bay of Green Bay's West Shore. Many of these came from Brown County's **34 acres of restored wetlands.**



The islands will hold **4.5 million cubic yards of outer harbor dredge material** and take **20-30 years to fill.**

What are PCBs? They are chemicals that were once used in industry and commerce before their production in the U.S. was banned in 1979. While their stability was a beneficial property in industrial applications, it also allows the PCBs to accumulate in the tissues of fish, wildlife and people. Studies have linked PCBs to reproductive problems in fish, wildlife and people, and to cancer in animals.

Lower Fox River PCB Cleanup

Removal of contaminated sediment from the river bottom is expected to be completed in 2017. PCB levels in walleye and other fish have already dropped in areas where toxic sediments have been removed. Once complete, the dredging project will result in a cleaner, deeper river with fish that are hopefully safer to eat.

Northern Pike Habitat Restoration

As a popular sport fish, each adult northern pike is estimated to be worth up to \$143 in local revenue from anglers. Northern pike are also a top predator that feed on invasive carp eggs and young fish. This project is restoring fish access to wetlands that provide natural spawning grounds for one of the bay of Green Bay's most important fish.

Cat Island Chain Restoration

The Cat Islands, destroyed by severe storms in the 1970s, are being rebuilt with clean, dredge material from the outer bay shipping channel. This project saves tax dollars by significantly reducing sediment disposal costs. It also restores important fish and wildlife habitat that will improve sport fishing, birding and waterfowl hunting in the region.

Many improvements to clean up the river and bay of Green Bay are bringing back fish and wildlife

Big challenges remain to restore the fishable, swimmable waters of one of the most valuable regions in the Great Lakes. The *Great Lakes Restoration Initiative* provides an opportunity to reduce runoff pollution and improve habitat in the river and bay.

Top priorities for action

✓ Reduce Polluted Runoff

Farmers, industries, municipalities and residents all have a role in reducing nutrients, soil and other pollutants (such as bacteria and pesticides) that enter the bay through snow melt and rain water. A 50% reduction in these pollutants is targeted to make the river and bay clearer and cleaner.

✓ Protect, Restore and Enhance Coastal Wetlands

Wetlands clean the water and provide important breeding and feeding areas for fish and wildlife. However, 90% of the coastal wetlands in southern Green Bay have been lost due to development and non-native plant and wildlife invasions. **Green Bay is home to more than half of Lake Michigan's remaining coastal wetlands**, making it critical that these natural areas are protected.

✓ Improve Coastal Public Access and Recreation

Public beaches, parks, trails and boat launches increase tourism and improve quality of life for area residents. Bringing back the Bay Beach public swimming area will attract families and visitors to the area.

✓ Prevent New Introductions of Invasive Plants and Animals

Asian carp and an estimated 57 additional non-native plants and animals pose a threat to the Great Lakes. In 2010, Wisconsin took a major step in preventing new aquatic invasive species by passing legislation regulating ballast water. Additional concerns include the potential for new introductions from fishing tournaments, connecting waterways, aquaculture and the pet trade.



Great blue heron and yellow perch. Jeffrey J. Strobel photos

Above: Construction of the Cat Island Chain rock spine structure in the lower bay. Brown County/USACE photo



Bay Beach was a popular swimming destination for decades before it was permanently closed in 1943 from raw sewage and industrial pollution. Scientists are currently testing the beach for harmful bacteria and algae with the hopes that someday it might once again provide a safe place for residents and visitors to enjoy the bay of Green Bay.

photos courtesy of Neville Museum



Clean Bay Backers include representation from:

Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission

Brown County Land and Water Conservation Department

Citizen volunteers

City of Green Bay

Ducks Unlimited

East Shore Drive Neighborhood Association

Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance

K-12 education

League of Women Voters (Lake Michigan Chapter)

NEW Paddlers Association

NEW Water (Green Bay Metropolitan Sewerage District)

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

University of Wisconsin—Extension

University of Wisconsin—Green Bay

University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute

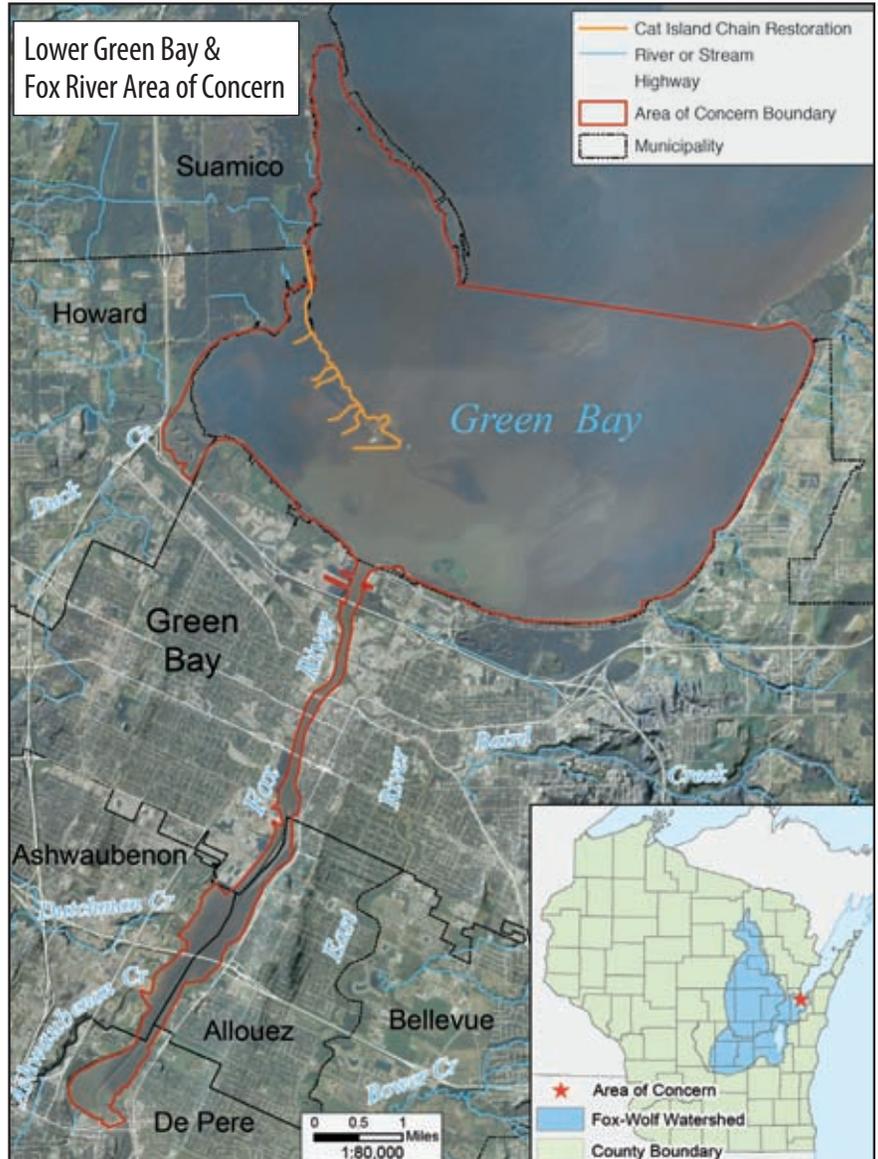
Wisconsin Marine Association



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“We need all hands on deck to improve our waters. Pulling together as a community, we can achieve that dream of having ‘fishable, swimmable’ waters again right here in our backyard.”

Tom Sigmund, Executive Director, NEW Water



For more information, contact:

Annette Pelegrin
 Lower Green Bay and Fox River Educator
 University of Wisconsin—Extension
 University of Wisconsin—Green Bay
 2420 Nicolet Drive, MAC 212
 Green Bay, WI 54311
 (920) 465-5031
 pelegrina@uwgb.edu

Please visit us online at:

fyi.uwex.edu/aocs/fox-river-green-bay and visit: dnr.wi.gov/topic/greatlakes/greenbay.html



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