MICHIGAN'S GREAT LAKES AREAS OF CONCERN PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is an Area of Concern?

An Area of Concern (AOC) is a geographic area in the Great Lakes Basin that has been degraded by high levels of pollution and need to be cleaned up. There were originally a total of 43 AOCs:

- 26 in the United States
- 12 in Canada
- 5 that are shared between the two countries.

Where are Michigan's Areas of Concern?

Of the 14 AOCs identified in Michigan, 4 have been cleaned up and removed from the list - or delisted - because they are no longer considered to be impaired. In 2014, Deer Lake in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and White Lake along Lake Michigan were delisted. The Lower Menominee River, an AOC shared with Wisconsin, was delisted in 2020 and Muskegon Lake along Lake Michigan was delisted in 2025.

The remaining 10 AOCs include: **Torch Lake**, **Manistique River**, and **St. Marys River** in the Upper Peninsula; **Kalamazoo River** on the western side of the state's Lower Peninsula; **Saginaw River and Bay** in the "Thumb" area, and **St. Clair River**, **Clinton River**, **Rouge River**, **Detroit River**, and **River Raisin** in southeast Michigan in the Detroit Metropolitan area.

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How are we cleaning up Michigan's AOCs?

Each AOC has its own history and set of problems, known as Beneficial Use Impairments (BUI). These problems are usually associated with harmful contaminants in the sediments of the rivers or lakes or the loss of habitat for fish and wildlife. Water quality improvements are important to protect our drinking water, remove environmental hazards, and restore the economic viability of impacted communities. We are cleaning up our AOCs with funds from the federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative by removing the harmful contaminants and restoring waterways and habitat.

How can I get involved?

The AOC program is unique because it involves a partnership between federal, state, and tribal governments, and local communities, including private citizens and non-profit organizations. Public Advisory Councils (PAC), that were established within each of the AOC communities, work closely with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) to restore the AOC in their community. Anyone can join one of Michigan's PACs. Visit Michigan.gov/AOCProgram to find out more, or contact EGLE's AOC staff.

For more information visit:

Michigan EGLE: Michigan.gov/aocprogram

United States EPA: epa.gov/great-lakes-aocs

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative: glri.us

Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement: epa.gov/glwqa

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