Healing Our Waters®
Great Lakes Coalition

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is Producing Results for Communities in Illinois

For over a decade, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has been producing results for communities. Cleaning up toxic pollution has rid harbors and rivers of cancer-causing pollutants and led to new waterfront development. Restoring wetlands have provided habitat for fish and wildlife and have led to cleaner sources of drinking water and increased outdoor recreation opportunities. Removing old and dangerous dams have opened up fish habitat and increased safety for river recreation. Building rain gardens, green spaces, and urban habitat has reduced neighborhood flooding and provided new spaces to play and congregate. These restoration investments have also led to economic benefits. A 2018 report found that every $1 invested in Great Lakes restoration produced at least $3 in increased economic activity. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has benefited the environment and the economy.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has been producing results in local communities in Illinois. Federal investments in Illinois total more than $188 million, which have led to 278 local projects that are working to protect our drinking water, safeguard public health, spur economic growth, and support thriving and vibrant communities.

While these projects have had a tremendous impact on Illinois communities, serious threats remain, underscoring the need for sustained and ongoing federal investment in Great Lakes restoration and local clean water priorities. We need to tackle these problems now, before they become more difficult and expensive to solve. We look forward to working with members of Congress to support continued federal investments in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to support our drinking water, public health, and economy.

EXAMPLES OF HOW THE GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE HAS BENEFITED ILLINOIS COMMUNITIES

Planting Trees Restores Shade to Urban Communities

Almost 800 trees were planted in Chicago neighborhoods, restoring shade and greenery to neighborhoods that had had their trees destroyed by the invasive species emerald ash borer. The new trees also are helping to reduce stormwater runoff and flooding and provide habitat for wildlife.

Creek Stabilization Reduces Erosion, Improves Habitat

Restoration of a creek in Illinois, near Lake Michigan, stabilized almost 500 linear feet of streambanks, reducing erosion and polluted runoff from entering the stream. These stabilization efforts reduced nutrient pollution more than 6 percent and sediment runoff by more than 36 percent, annually.

Restoration of Native Grasses Improves Beach Health for Swimmers to Enjoy

A popular beach off the coast of Lake Michigan in Illinois had to be closed due to pollution. By planting grasses and other native species that were wiped out, a restored ecological balance improved water quality, significantly reducing beach closures.