

# St. Louis River Area of Concern Remedial Action Plan Update

## A Roadmap to Delisting

July 15, 2013

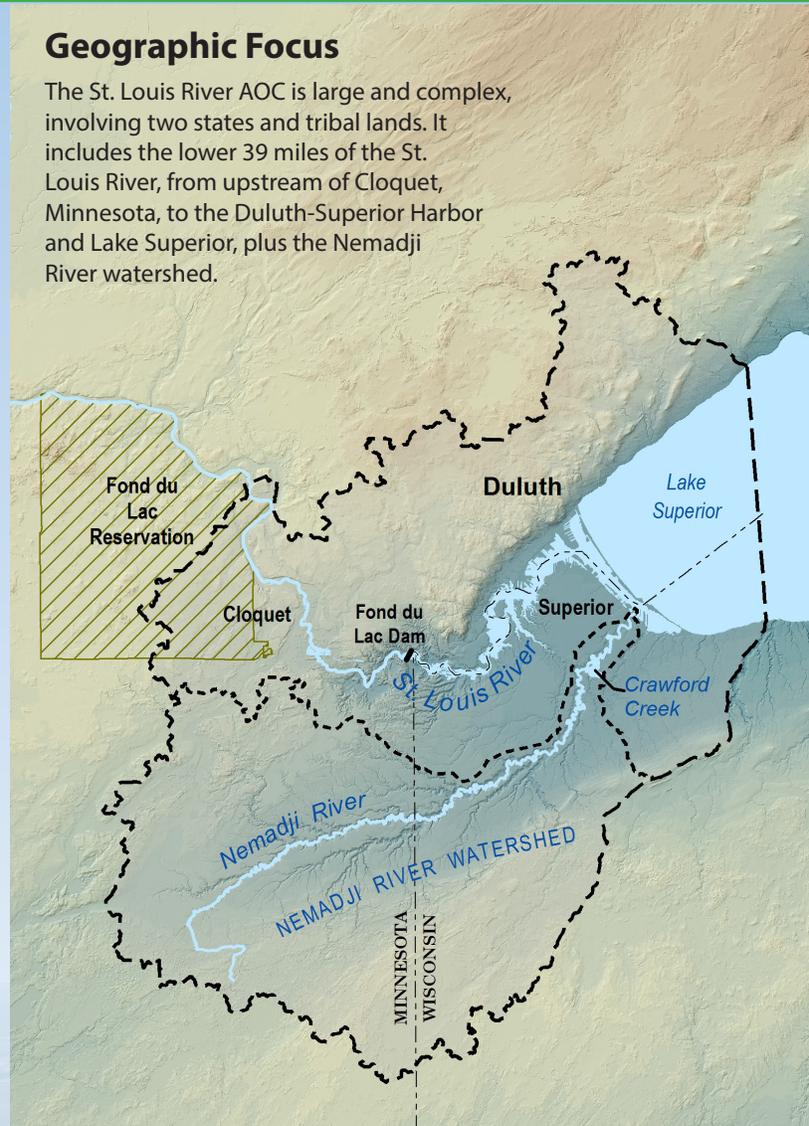
The St. Louis River Area of Concern (AOC) was listed as one of 43 AOCs on the Great Lakes in 1987. Historical actions such as improper municipal and industrial waste disposal and unchecked land use practices, including dredging and filling of aquatic habitat and damaging logging practices, contributed to the complex set of issues facing the AOC at the time it was listed. In 1992, the Remedial Action Plan determined that nine Beneficial Use Impairments (BUI) existed in the AOC.

The AOC Delisting Roadmap is a comprehensive plan that details the actions necessary to remove each of the BUIs identified for the St. Louis River AOC.

Development of the Roadmap was made possible through a Great Lakes Restoration initiative grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA). Capacity funding from U.S. EPA allowed multiple organizations to work together in a concerted effort to complete the Roadmap. This effort supports the goal of removing the nine BUIs and delisting the AOC by 2025.

### Geographic Focus

The St. Louis River AOC is large and complex, involving two states and tribal lands. It includes the lower 39 miles of the St. Louis River, from upstream of Cloquet, Minnesota, to the Duluth-Superior Harbor and Lake Superior, plus the Nemadji River watershed.





# Miles Traveled Already – Progress to Date

The Roadmap begins after significant work has been done to restore the AOC since it was listed. Well over \$420M has been invested since 1978 on infrastructure upgrades, remediation, and habitat restoration and protection. Improved municipal wastewater treatment and significant progress on control of wet weather overflows have contributed to water quality improvement and returning fish and wildlife populations. Some contaminated sites have been remediated and restored, including Hog Island Newtown Creek in Wisconsin and the St. Louis River Interlake Duluth Tar Superfund site in Minnesota. In addition, numerous habitat protection and restoration projects have been completed across the AOC. A few examples include:

- » Protection of Clough Island
- » Restoration of Tallas Island at the mouth of Knowlton Creek
- » Protection of 6,500 acres of geologically sensitive habitat in the St. Louis River Stream Bank Protection Area
- » Creation of colonial waterbird habitat creation at Wisconsin Point
- » Protection of more than 4,500 acres in two Wisconsin State Natural Areas within the Pokegama River watershed

The Roadmap is the next step to build on this progress to address legacy sediment contamination and lost wetland habitat of the St. Louis River estuary.

## Beneficial Use Impairments in the St. Louis River AOC

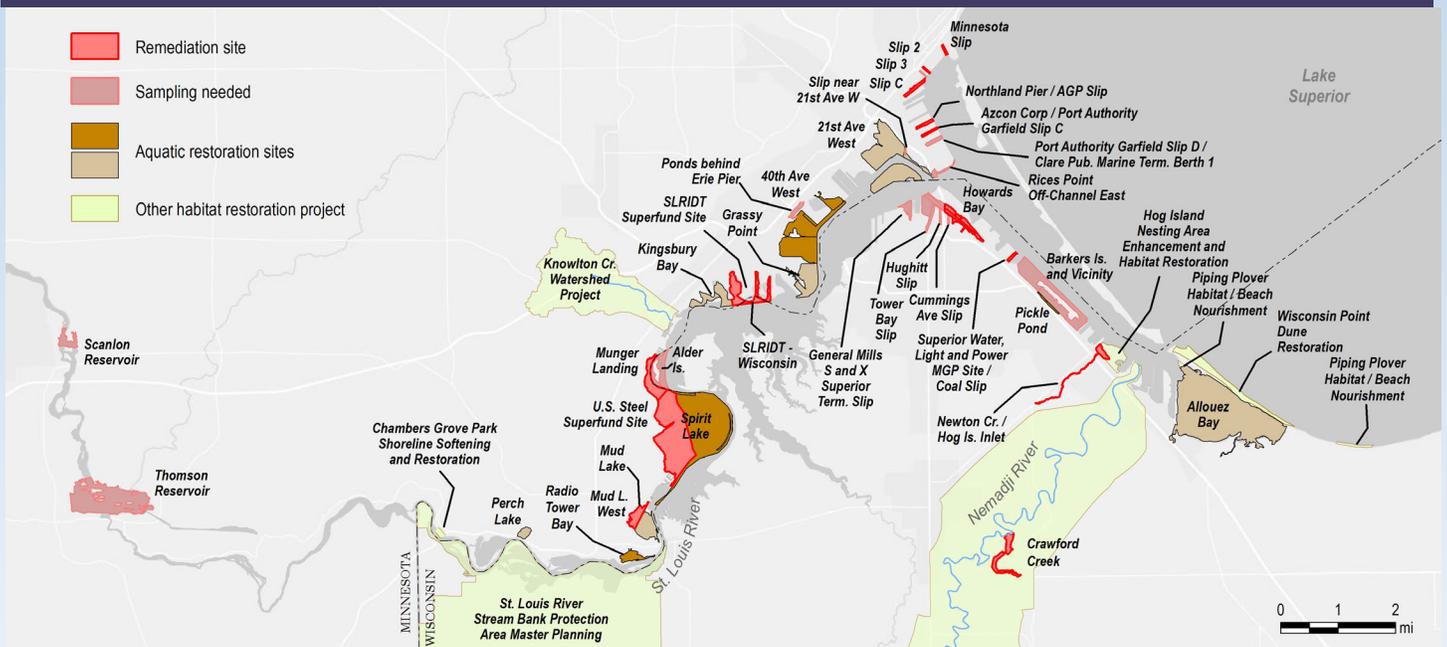
- BUI 1: Fish Consumption Advisories
- BUI 2: Degraded Fish and Wildlife Populations
- BUI 3: Fish Tumors and Other Deformities
- BUI 4: Degradation of Benthos
- BUI 5: Restrictions on Dredging
- BUI 6: Excessive Loading of Sediment and Nutrients
- BUI 7: Beach Closings and Body Contact Restrictions
- BUI 8: Degradation of Aesthetics
- BUI 9: Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat

**The sturgeon population in the St. Louis River was extirpated in the mid-20th century. Sturgeon fry were found in the St. Louis River in 2011 and 2013 – the first ever evidence of successful spawning since the sturgeon rehabilitation program began.**



Photo by Brian Borkholder, FDL

# Remediation and Restoration Sites in the St. Louis River AOC



# The Roadmap is

- **Inclusive:** Developed by an extensive stakeholder involvement process led by Minnesota and Wisconsin with active participation of the Fond du Lac Band.
- **Strategic:** Provides strategies and actions to achieve removal objectives, and establishes a timeline and estimated costs to achieve objectives.
- **Targeted:** Sets an overall goal to delist the AOC by 2025 using funding sources, which include the federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and Minnesota’s Clean Water, Land and Legacy.

Photo by Diane Desotelle, MPCA

## Anticipated BUI Removal Timeline

2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
		BUI 8	BUI 2 BUI 3 BUI 6		BUI 7				BUI 4	BUI 5		BUI 1 BUI 9

# Roadmap Destinations

Implementation of the actions included in the Roadmap will result in:

- » Restoration of more than 1,700 acres of aquatic habitat in the St. Louis River estuary.
- » Remediation of at least 13 contaminated sites, including the U.S. Steel Superfund site and multiple slips in Minnesota and Crawford Creek and Howards Bay in Wisconsin.
- » Restoration of additional hydrologically connected habitat, including suitable nesting habitat for the endangered Piping Plover.
- » Sustained partnerships for managing the St. Louis River estuary into the future.

# The Roadmap gets us there

The Roadmap defines a path forward to restore and delist the AOC, so the legacy of the St. Louis River estuary can be redefined for generations of local residents and visitors.

Implementing the actions in the Roadmap will require an investment currently estimated ranging from \$300-\$400 million. It is critical that this needed investment be stable and sustained until the Roadmap is successfully completed and the AOC is delisted. In addition, the completion of this aggressive effort will require the continued involvement from multiple agencies, partners and citizens.

## Leading and coordinating the Roadmap are representatives from:

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)  
Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (FDL)  
St. Louis River Alliance (SLRA)

Photo by Joel Flick, USFWS

## For more information contact:

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## Find the St. Louis River AOC RAP Roadmap at these web addresses:

MPCA - <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/stlouisriveraoc>  
WDNR - <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/greatlakes/st.louis.html>  
U.S. EPA - <http://www.epa.gov/greatlakes/aoc/stlouis/index.html>

