



Sandusky Bay Initiative

Overview

Sandusky Bay is a significant and unique bay ecosystem within the Great Lakes and holds some of the most significant coastal wetland systems in the Lake Erie basin. The Bay is separated from the open waters of Lake Erie by the Marblehead Peninsula to the northwest and the Cedar Point peninsula to the east. Sandusky Bay can be subdivided into three sub-basins: Western Bay, Eastern Bay, and East Sandusky Bay located south of the Cedar Point Chaussée.

In addition to coastal wetlands, Sandusky Bay is a highly productive fishery area and serves as a centerpiece for public recreation and tourism. Sandusky Bay has been recognized as a priority management area by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and a number of initiatives including the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, particularly with respect to fisheries management and nutrient reduction priorities.

Today, the Bay possesses challenges of excessive nutrient and sediment loads, including cyanobacteria blooms and a significant degradation of water quality. While there have been efforts to implement land-based watershed and stormwater management plans for the Sandusky River Watershed, there is no overall strategy to address the open waters of Sandusky Bay.

Phase 1

The Department of Natural Resources and Ohio EPA, working with the city of Sandusky and local restoration partners, will initially fund engineering, design and permitting work for up to four in-water habitat restoration projects that beneficially reuse material dredged from the Sandusky Harbor shipping channels. This is Phase 1 of the Sandusky Bay Initiative.

Projects will be designed to restore in-water coastal wetlands, improve nearshore water quality by reducing nutrient and suspended sediment loads, and enhance wildlife, waterfowl and fisheries habitat in Sandusky Bay. For Sandusky Harbor, this will allow the state of Ohio to meet the July 1, 2020, deadline to eliminate open-lake disposal of dredge material into Lake Erie.

restoring habitat & water quality

improving public access

supporting the local economy

beneficially reusing dredged material

Phase 2

For Phase 2, the state of Ohio, working with local partners, will invest in the design of a suite of innovative wetland and nature-based shoreline restoration and enhancement projects designed to improve water quality by reducing nutrient and sediment loads in the Bay.

Because water entering the Bay from the mouth of the Sandusky River flows from west to east through Sandusky Bay, an opportunity exists to sequentially process these waters through a system of in-water flow-through wetlands, nature-based shorelines, and in-water wetland complexes that will progressively improve water quality and water clarity.

For Sandusky Bay, this work will allow the state of Ohio to eliminate harmful algal blooms and significantly reduce nutrient and sediment loads in the Bay.

The outcome of this strategy will be a portfolio of projects ready for implementation by various partners that address the goals to improve the water quality and ecological functions in the Bay.

Additional natural resource and economic benefits will also accrue through the restoration of wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitats, and improved water and habitat quality. All will support increased recreational activity.

Learn more: For additional information, please contact the Ohio DNR Office of Coastal Management coastal@dnr.state.oh.us or 419.626.7980.



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What it Could Look Like

Below are 'now' and artist's renderings of how restoring wetlands and nature-based shorelines will enhance visitor's experience in the Lake Erie shores and islands region. Locations of restoration, and what restored areas will look like upon completion, may differ. For additional information about the Sandusky Bay Initiative, please contact the Ohio DNR Office of Coastal Management coastal@dnr.state.oh.us or 419.626.7980.



West of Cedar Point Causeway



Tributary drainage into East Sandusky Bay



Sandusky Bay

Surface Area
64 square miles

Surrounded by
3 counties: Ottawa, Erie, Sandusky [8 townships, 2 villages, 1 city]

Length 22 miles

Western Sandusky Bay
average depth: < 6 feet
average width: 4 miles

Edison Bridge
average depth: 9 feet
average width: 1 mile

Eastern Sandusky Bay
average depth: 6 to 9 feet
includes shipping channels that are dredged 21-28 feet
average width: 3.5 miles

East Sandusky Bay
average depth: ~ 3 feet
average width: 0.7 mile