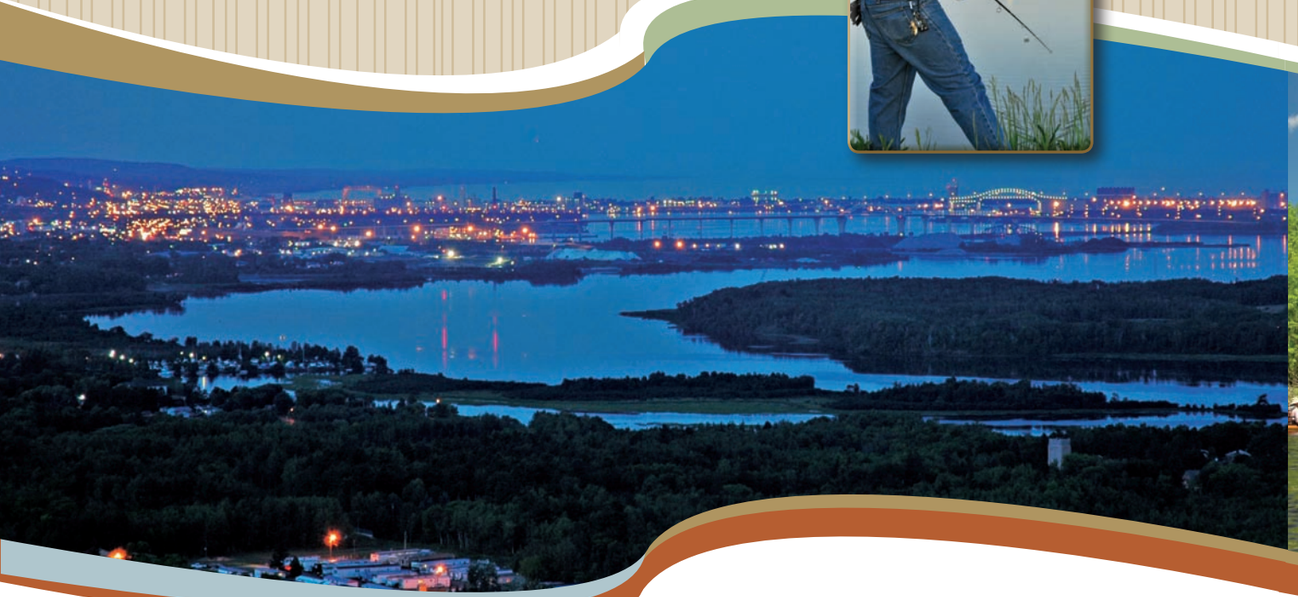
The St. Louis River is among 43 Great Lakes "Areas of Concern" listed through the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement between the U.S. and Canada in the 1980s. These "Areas of Concern" share a history of past industrial uses when dumping waste on land and water was common place. These past practices left



"legacy" pollutants in bottom sediment, which degraded habitat for fish and wildlife, and contributed to human health risks. The Water Quality Agreement called upon states, provinces, and the federal governments to clean up these areas. Sustained funding, however, has not been available to fully realize this goal. In 1992, the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin developed a Remedial Action Plan for the St. Louis River, together with local citizens and technical experts. These dedicated citizens later formed the non-profit organization, the St. Louis River Citizens Action Committee (now the St. Louis River Alliance), to encourage implementation of the plan and to support protection of the river. In 2008, the states and the St. Louis River Alliance developed renewed goals and targets for river clean-up.

For more information on the St. Louis River Remedial Action Plan, the Lower St. Louis River Habitat Plan and goals for the St. Louis River see:

www.stlouisriver.org

This brochure was developed by:

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
St. Louis River Alliance
University of Wisconsin - Extension

Design by Amy B. Torrey, UW-Extension Environmental Resources Center
Map courtesy of MPCA. Photos courtesy of MPCA, WLSSD, Ryan Brady and Frank Koshere WI-DNR

August 2009

THE ST. LOUIS RIVER Restoration Initiative

Federal funding from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and new Minnesota sales tax funds give us unprecedented opportunities to proceed with clean-up and restoration of the St. Louis River Estuary & Harbor.

An unparalleled opportunity to invest in our river & our communities

Minnesota and Wisconsin have worked together for over 20 years to improve the St. Louis River. Our strong partnerships have made great progress to clean up, restore, and protect our water. However, important clean-up projects still need to be completed. With these new funding sources, we can make major progress to restore and protect the value of our St. Louis River, estuary, and harbor.

Our economy and communities will benefit from a healthy St. Louis River in many ways:

- Increased property values
- Reduced costs for property re-development
- Improved recreational opportunities
- Reduced human health risks
- Improved quality of life

Wisconsin - Minnesota Action List 2009 - 2010

ST. LOUIS RIVER ESTUARY & HARBOR: Past projects & future needs

1. Minnesota Slip $ Sediment contamination. Provides a focus for Duluth's tourism industry with maritime tours, fishing charters, and gathering point for pedestrians.

2. Rice's Point $$ Active slips contain grain elevators, a seaway terminal, fueling docks, and wind turbine transfer operations. Legacy contaminants have been detected in most of the 9 slips. ***Next step:*** *Fully assess contaminants and support the City of Duluth in its efforts to revitalize the urban waterfront.*

3. Minnesota Point $ Together with WI Point, forms the largest freshwater baymouth sand bar in North America. Separates the estuary from the open waters of Lake Superior, creating a naturally sheltered harbor. ***Next step:*** *Protect natural areas.*

4. Superior Wastewater Treatment Plant $$ Wastewater, stormwater, and special waste programs improve and protect the quality of the estuary and its tributaries.

5. Ballast Water Treatment Testing Facility $ Testing facility for ballast water treatment technologies operated by University of Wisconsin Superior.

6. Hog Island and Newton Creek $ $7 million investment removed contaminated sediment in 2005 (Federal Great Lakes Legacy Fund). ***Next step:*** *Restore wetlands for waterfowl and fish.* $

7. Crawford Creek $$ A tributary to the Nemadji River. Contaminated sediment in stream and wetland. ***Next step:*** *Responsible party clean-up and possible wetland restoration.*

8. Allouez Bay $ Sediment washing downstream and churning in the bay is degrading habitat. ***Next step:*** *Upstream watershed conservation.*

9. Interstate Island $ One of only two nesting areas for common terns on Lake Superior. Low elevation, vegetation encroachment, and competition for other birds jeopardize the success of the terns. ***Next step:*** *Improve and enlarge nesting habitat.*

10. Howard's Bay $ Contaminated sediment. ***Next step:*** *Fully assess bay for clean-up followed by potential wetland restoration at the base of the bay.*

11. 21st Avenue West Bay $$ Located at the mouths of urban trout streams, Miller and Coffee Creeks, this site is a candidate for habitat creation utilizing harbor dredged materials. ***Next step:*** *Work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and local stakeholders to determine the feasibility of creating waterfowl and fish spawning habitat. Investigate and clean up sediment contamination.*

12. Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD) and City of Duluth $$$ Created in 1971 by the MN legislature in response to serious environmental problems in the river, WLSSD began advanced wastewater treatment in the late 1970s. Innovative wastewater and special waste programs improve and protect the quality of the estuary and its tributaries. Significant collection system and stormwater upgrades in Duluth are ongoing.

13. Erie Pier / Dredged Material Management $ Erie Pier is a Confined Disposal Facility (CDF) for sediments from navigation dredging. It processes clean sediment for reuse in construction projects. Reuse of clean dredged material reduces the need for another CDF.

14. Coffee Ground Flats $$ Contaminated sediments. ***Next step:*** *Remediate contaminated sediment and restore native aquatic vegetation to increase waterfowl and fish habitat.*

15. Grassy Point $ More than 11,000 cubic yards of wood waste were removed in 1994 to restore wetland that now provides fish and waterfowl habitat. An interpretive access trail was constructed within the sheltered bay.

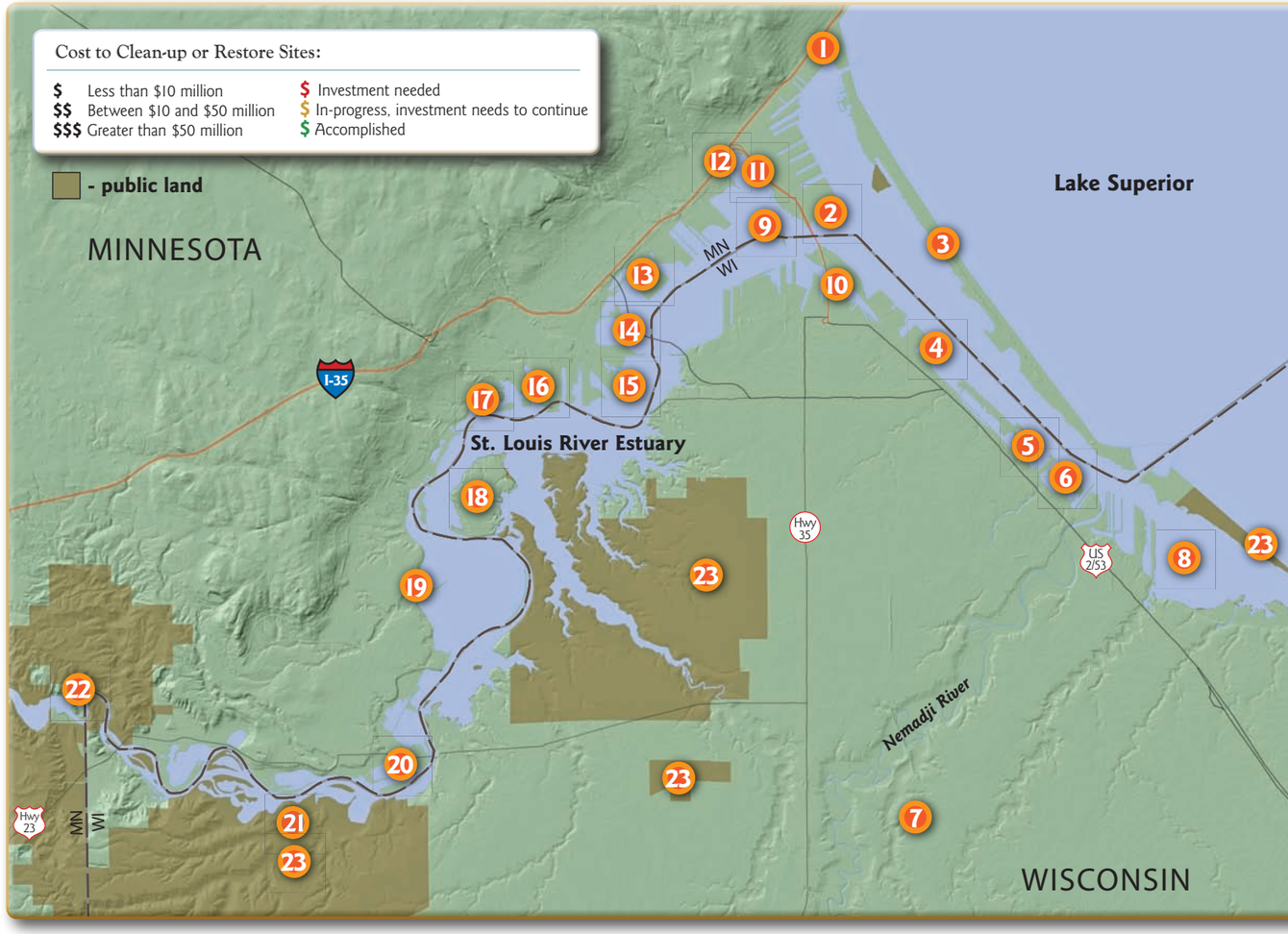
16. Stryker Bay / Interlake Superfund Site $$$ In the 1990s, tar was excavated from the site. 2009 is the fifth and final year of clean-up for contaminated sediment in the bays. Responsible party clean-up. ***Next step:*** *Mitigate by restoring Tallas Island in 2010.*

17. Tallas Island and Knowlton Creek $ Sedimentation from historical activities within the watershed has filled in a sheltered bay behind Tallas Island. ***Next Step:*** *Increase wetland habitat by restoring and reconnecting the sheltered bay to the estuary, and control on-going sedimentation from the watershed.*

18. Clough Island $ Wetland complexes have significant value in undeveloped state. ***Next step:*** *Public/private conservation agencies seek to acquire land for permanent protection.*

19. U.S. Steel Superfund Site $$$ Contaminated sediment and soil pose a human health risk and degrade fish and wildlife habitat. ***Next step:*** *Determine options for responsible party clean-up.*

20. Cedar Yard Bay (Radio Tower Bay) $ Historic sawmill operations deposited slab wood and woodchips over a 65-acre area, reducing biological and recreational functions of the bay. ***Next step:*** *Enhance habitat by removing woody debris and reestablishing native vegetation.*



Before the 1970s, untreated sewage and industrial wastes were often dumped directly to the river. Soil and sediments are contaminated around many former industrial sites. In the 1990s, clean-up of some of these sites began, but several sites still need to be cleaned up and restored, so they can provide healthy habitat and redevelopment opportunities.

21. St. Louis Streambank Protection Area $ The State of WI invested $1 million in the 1990s to preserve 6,444 acres of sensitive, highly erodible streambank, protecting the health of the St. Louis River.

22. Fond du Lac Dam Lake Sturgeon Habitat Improvement $ Removal of a rock wing dam and creation of three boulder riffles immediately below the dam will provide improved spawning habitat conditions for lake sturgeon and walleye over a wide range of flow conditions.

23. St. Louis River Estuary - Lake Superior NERR Areas $ In 2008, Wisconsin's nomination of the St. Louis River Freshwater Estuary for a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) designation was accepted by NOAA. Proposed areas for the NERR are focused on key publicly owned lands within the St. Louis River Streambank Protection Area, Superior Municipal Forest, Oliver Marsh, Pokegama – Carnegie Wetlands State Natural Area, Wisconsin Point, and at the mouth of Dutchman's Creek.