

Lake Michigan Illinois Watershed Plan

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

WATERSHED FACTS



The Lake Michigan drainage area in Illinois is **88 square miles**. 54 square miles of the watershed

are in Lake County and two square miles are in Cook County, north of Tower Road. From north to south, Green Bay Road generally marks the drainage divide between the Lake Michigan watershed to the east

and the Mississippi River watershed to the west.

The watershed includes nine Lake County, and two Cook County, municipalities; five major townships; three harbors/marinas; several public beaches; and six tributary streams, including the Waukegan River. There are more than 40 ravines with small streams within the system. These ravines provide drainage in our communities and support a significant number of plants and animals seldom found in Illinois.

5 major sub-watersheds are identified in Lake and Cook County.

From north to south they are: Kellogg Creek, Dead River, Waukegan River, Pettibone

Creek, and Bluff/Ravine. The Lake Michigan coastal plain extends from Waukegan north to Winthrop Harbor, and into Wisconsin. It includes a large wetland complex designated a wetland of international importance by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.



WHAT IS THE LAKE MICHIGAN WATERSHED PLAN?



The Lake Michigan Watershed consists of diverse stakeholders, both public and private, **working to develop a regional strategy to improve water quality, manage stormwater, and enhance water resources** by identifying, prioritizing and finding innovative solutions for issues facing the coastal environment.

The watershed plan will follow a stakeholder-driven approach **focused on** locally-led decision-making and sound science. Lake shore communities have invested more than \$20 million for

on-the-ground restoration projects over the past few decades, not including the Federal investment at Waukegan Harbor.

The Lake Michigan Watershed Plan will bolster this important work by fulfilling the need for new and updated plans throughout the watershed and providing stakeholders in our region a strong position for accessing funding for watershed projects.



WHY DO WE NEED A LAKE MICHIGAN WATERSHED PLAN?



Improve Water Quality and Build Sustainable Communities

The Illinois EPA has identified **impaired water quality** in eight segments of watershed streams. Ten beaches along the coastline have IEPA water quality impairments. These include North Point Marina and Waukegan Harbor, and the nearshore waters of Lake Michigan off Lake and Cook Counties for non-support of swimming, fish consumption, and aesthetic quality uses.

Additionally, the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission, its municipal partners, other local units of government and stakeholders, have identified **erosion concerns in the bluff, ravine, beach and stream channels** as well as localized flooding and drainage issues.

Build on Our Accomplishments

The planning process will include ten-year updates to the Kellogg Creek, Dead River, and Waukegan River watershed plans, as well as an update to the 2009 Strategic **Sub-Watershed Identification Process** ravine inventory. Combined with current stakeholder input and additional data-gathering, the plan will provide greater understanding of the causes and sources of water quality impairment and identify priority watershed issues so that resources can be directed to projects and activities that provide the greatest benefit.



Prioritize and Implement Watershed Projects



Photo credit: Park District of Highland Park

An approved watershed plan is the preferred approach for identifying watershed projects for grant funding by the U.S. EPA, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Illinois EPA, and other funding agencies. Prospective restoration and remediation projects are at a significant disadvantage when applying for competitive grant funding in areas where no approved watershed plan exists.

No watershed plans exist for the ravine watersheds in North Chicago, Lake Bluff, Lake Forest, Highwood, Highland Park, Glencoe, and Winnetka, or the Pettibone Creek that runs through the Great Lakes Naval Base. Although plans were developed nearly ten years ago for the Kellogg Creek, Dead River, and Waukegan River watersheds, to be considered current by potential project funders, watershed plans must be updated every ten years.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO COMMUNITIES?

Through **collaboration and combined efforts**, we can present a regional approach to solving water quality and other lakeshore issues that impact us all. Sharing resources will provide **leverage to seek grant funds** to defray the costs of the planning effort. A formal review of existing conditions will help municipalities **prioritize the use of their own precious capital resources**. Working together, agencies can draw on others' experiences to develop effective and sustainable **best management practices**.

