

# Peninsula Harbour Area of Concern

## Newsletter 2014

### Sediment capping project complete

In 2012, Canada and Ontario finished the last major action needed to address environmental problems in the Peninsula Harbour Area of Concern (AOC). Two hundred thousand square metres of sediment contaminated with mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are being safely managed under a 15-20 centimetre thick cap of clean sand. The cap has also created aquatic habitat for plants and animals and will speed up natural recovery of the area.

The project was funded by the Government of Canada, the Ontario government and a former mill owner. The total cost of the project was \$7.3 million.

### Next steps

The next step is to continue to monitor the area to make sure the environment is recovering. Sediment quality, cap thickness, aquatic vegetation, and contaminant levels in sediment-dwelling organisms and fish are being monitored. This long-term en-



vironmental monitoring program is being implemented by Environment Canada, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

To date, environmental monitoring results show that cap materials remain in place and some aquatic vegetation is growing in the capped area.

The government agencies will share updates with representatives from the Town of Marathon, Ojibways of the Pic River First Nation and others as monitoring results become available.

When environmental monitoring confirms that ecosystem health has improved, and that locally-established environmental targets have been met, Canada and Ontario will engage with the Town of Marathon, local Aboriginal communities, the public and other stakeholders on whether Peninsula Harbour should be removed from the list of AOCs.

### Background: The Peninsula Harbour Area of Concern

Peninsula Harbour is one of 43 AOCs (now 38 with five fully remediated) in the Great Lakes



identified in accordance with the 1987 Canada-United States Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. Canada and the U.S. are responsible for working with partners to develop and implement Remedial Action Plans (RAPs) for each Area of Concern.

The AOC includes approximately 12 kilometres of shoreline, including the Town of Marathon's waterfront, and extends four kilometres into Lake Superior.

In Peninsula Harbour, historical pulp mill and municipal pollution led to:

- bacterial contamination
- high levels of chemicals in fish and sediment
- loss of fish habitat
- impacts to sediment-dwelling organisms.

In response to provincial and federal wastewater regulations developed in the 1990s, the local

pulp mill improved the quality of its wastewater which resulted in better water quality, and improved fish habitat.

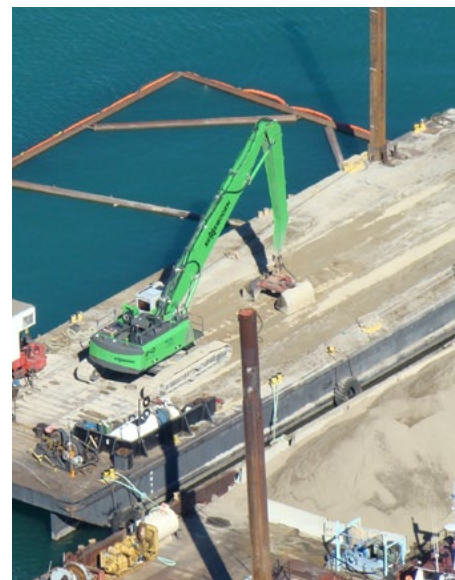
With the source of contamination controlled, the main focus of the RAP was to address contaminated sediment in the harbour.

## Cleaning up Areas of Concern

Canada and Ontario work together to restore Canadian and binational AOCs. That work relies on collaboration with conservation authorities, municipalities, Aboriginal communities, environmental groups, industry and the public. Working together, communities and governments develop and implement RAPs.

Of the 38 remaining AOCs in the Great Lakes, there are nine in Canada, 24 in the United States

and five that are shared by both countries. Three Canadian and two United States locations have been fully remediated and removed from the list of AOCs. Two Canadian locations have been recognized as Areas of Concern in Recovery.



## For more information:

For more information on the Peninsula Harbour Area of Concern: [www.northshorerap.ca](http://www.northshorerap.ca)

For more information on Areas of Concern visit: [www.ec.gc.ca/raps-pas](http://www.ec.gc.ca/raps-pas)

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