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AREAS OF CONCERN **HAMILTON HARBOUR**

Efforts in Hamilton Harbour are undertaken in a partnership between the Government of Canada, other levels of government and non-government groups, including members of the public.

Undertaking environmental restoration requires a large amount of scientific and technical expertise, local knowledge and hard work. One agency or group cannot engage in such a large task on its own without the help of others.



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Environment Canada and its partners have implemented many projects and studies to restore water quality and ecosystem health in the Hamilton Harbour Area of Concern (AOC). The last two steps in the remediation process are the cleanup of contaminated sediment at the Randle Reef location and the upgrading of the Skyway and Woodward Avenue Wastewater Treatment Plants.

Why was it listed as an Area of Concern?

Hamilton Harbour was designated as an AOC because a review of available data indicated that water quality and environmental health were severely degraded. The harbour has been subject to the impacts of intensive industrial and urban development around its shores for many years. Historically, the economy of the area surrounding Hamilton Harbour was dominated by the steel and iron industry. Today, the harbour remains a major shipping centre and supports one of the largest concentrations of heavy industry in Canada. It also receives the discharge from three wastewater treatments plants, as well as urban runoff from the cities of Hamilton and Burlington. Some sediments in the harbour are contaminated by metals, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) released into the environment by past practices, stretching back over more than a century.

What have we accomplished?

An upgrade to the Woodward Avenue Wastewater Treatment Plant and the construction of combined sewer overflow tanks have reduced the amount of raw sewage and surface debris entering the harbour and allowed for the opening of local beaches. The Skyway Wastewater Treatment Plant has undergone plant optimization to improve effluent quality and is being further upgraded.

Approximately 376 hectares of fish and wildlife habitat and 12 kilometres of shoreline habitat have been restored.

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Programs have been implemented to return aquatic vegetation to Cootes Paradise Marsh. These include measures to control carp, improve water quality and water clarity. Similar programs are in place for the Grindstone Marsh ecosystem. In addition, fish habitat has been constructed along the western shoreline of the harbour, Bayfront Park, LaSalle Park and the northeastern shoreline.

A shoal has been constructed in the northeast corner of Hamilton Harbour to provide spawning habitat for walleye and smallmouth bass, and to encourage species such as lake herring and whitefish to return to Hamilton Harbour.

Islands for the nesting of colonial waterbirds have been constructed in the harbour and a 15-hectare wetland has been constructed in Windermere Basin, which includes islands for common tern nesting.

What's left to do?

The Randle Reef cleanup project is one of two remaining major steps in the process to remediate Hamilton Harbour and remove it from the list of AOCs. This project will improve water quality, remove current restrictions on navigation and generate economic returns through the creation of valuable port lands. Environment Canada and its partners have

established agreements to implement the project and are working to finalize arrangements to initiate the cleanup, which will remediate 675,000 cubic metres of contaminated sediment. The other major step in the remediation process is upgrading the Woodward Avenue Wastewater Treatment

Plant in Hamilton and the Skyway Wastewater Treatment Plant in Burlington, to improve effluent water quality. These projects are currently underway.

Outlook

It is anticipated that this AOC will be delisted by 2025.

Where can you find more information?

Environment Canada e-mail:
greatlakes-grandlacs@ec.gc.ca

Environment Canada web site:
www.ec.gc.ca/raps

Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan:
www.hamiltonharbour.ca/rap/index.htm

PARTNERS

ArcelorMittal Dofasco

Bay Area Restoration Council

City of Burlington

City of Hamilton

Conservation Halton

Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Hamilton Conservation Authority

Hamilton Halton Home Builders' Association

Hamilton Port Authority

Hamilton Waterfront Trust

McMaster University

Ontario Ministry of the Environment

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

Regional Municipality of Halton

Royal Botanical Gardens

U.S. Steel Canada (formerly Stelco)