



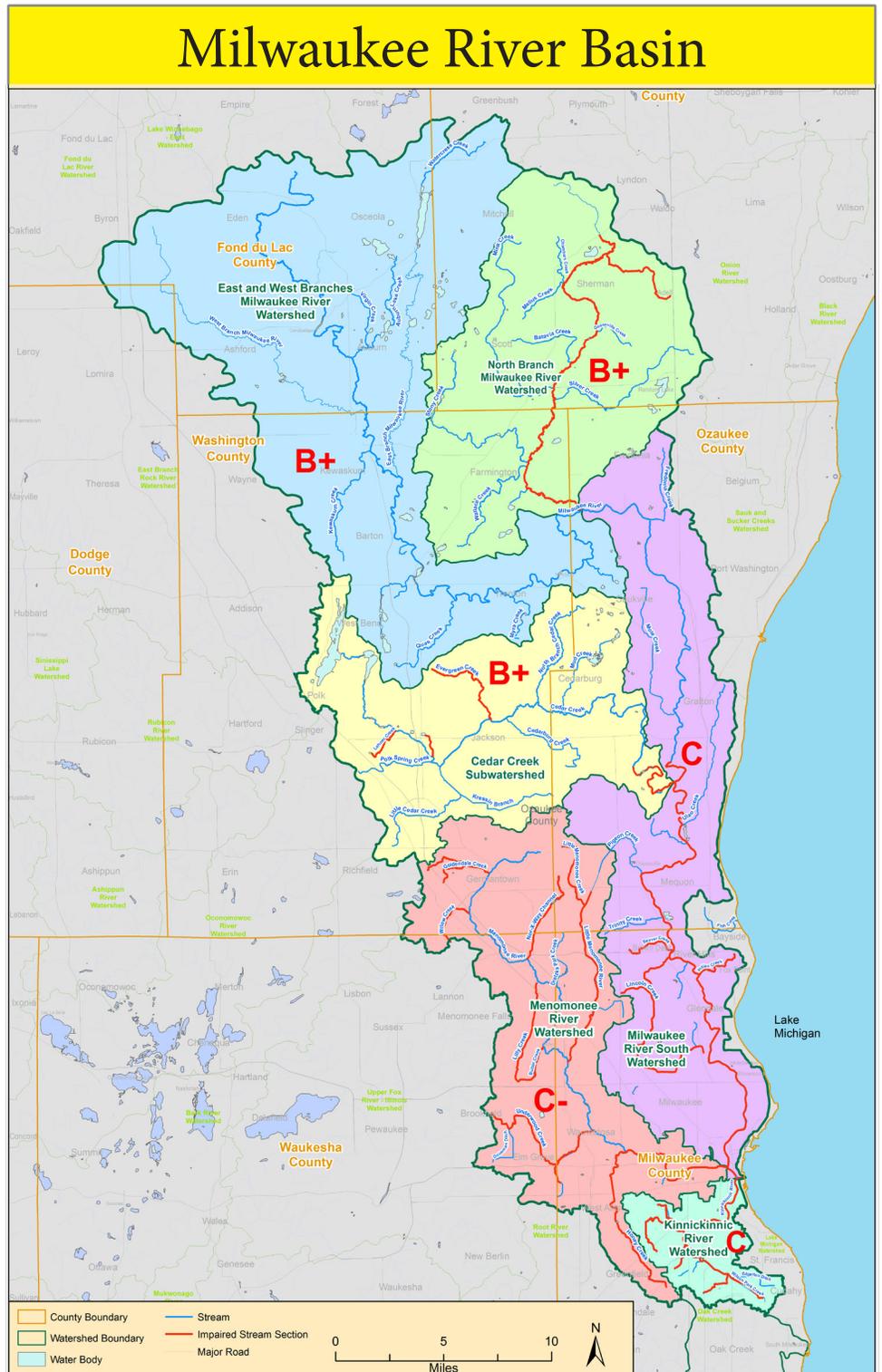
## 2013 Milwaukee River Basin Report Card

Our annual 2013 River Report Card is hot off the presses. The good news is that there is a subtly marked improvement in water quality from 2012. The bad news is that we are still seeing severe impairments from phosphorus, bacteria, turbidity, and road salt (high conductivity and chloride levels during the road salting season).

As we continually improve and add relevant content to our River Report Card, the 2013 version is divided into sections by watershed or subwatershed. We have included some basic information about the general landscape of each watershed and subwatershed to help you to become familiar with each of their unique and shared characteristics.

Once again our grades reflect data collected by our volunteer stream monitors, as well as data collected by the surface water monitoring team at the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD). The MMSD data extends throughout its service area, which includes monitoring sites in the southern portion of the Milwaukee River South Subwatershed, as well as large portions of the Menomonee and Kinnickinnic River Watersheds.

The overall Milwaukee River Basin grade (which includes data from the Milwaukee, Menomonee and Kinnickinnic River Watersheds) improved from a C- in 2012 to a C in 2013. During this same time period, the Milwaukee River Watershed (including the North Branch, East and West Branches, Cedar Creek and Milwaukee River South Subwatersheds) went from a "C" to a "C+"; the Menomonee River



*Continued page 2*

# Welcome Our New Board Members!

It's a new year and we have some great new additions to our Board of Directors. We are so very pleased to welcome Joe Cincotta, Gail Epping-Overholt, Brian Lambert and Brian Spahn to our Board of Directors. We thank them for joining us in our efforts create swimmable, fishable rivers and we are grateful for their board service and commitment.

## Thank You To Our Donors!

We are overwhelmed by the success of our end of the year appeal and your generosity! **THANK YOU!** Your commitment to our rivers is inspiring. We are thankful to have wonderful supporters who believe in our mission and take action towards clean drinking water and fishable, swimmable rivers!

Didn't get a chance to donate? Visit [www.milwaukeekeeper.org](http://www.milwaukeekeeper.org) or call (414) 287-0207. Every dollar you donate to Milwaukee Riverkeeper goes directly to our work of restoring streambanks, identifying pollution, and fighting for strong policies and enforcement of laws to keep our water clean.

## 2013 Annual River Report Card,

*continued from page 1*

Watershed went from a D to a C-; and the Kinnickinnic River Watershed went from a C- to a C.

While water quality has generally improved, specific parameters remain a problem. Bacteria data collected by MMSD and conductivity data from both MMSD and Milwaukee Riverkeeper continue to show failing grades in each major watershed. An influx of phosphorus and chloride data from MMSD in 2013, appears to have improved overall grades for those parameters when added to Riverkeeper data from 2013 due to a larger sample size. All three watersheds had F grades for phosphorus in 2012, but the Kinnickinnic and Menomonee River Watersheds improved to a C- and C, respectively in 2013.

On a positive note, grades for water temperature, dissolved oxygen and pH all remained in the A to B range.

|               | <b>Overall Grade</b> |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 2013 Grade    | <b>C</b>             |
| % meet target | 74.2                 |
| # samples     | 10509                |
| 2012 Grade    | <b>C-</b>            |
| % meet target | 71.7                 |
| # samples     | 7078                 |
| 2011 Grade    | <b>D+</b>            |
| % meet target | 68.5                 |
| # samples     | 7712                 |

**Check out our 2013 Report Card at [milwaukeekeeper.org](http://milwaukeekeeper.org) to get the full scoop!**

|                           | Overall Grade | Dissolved Oxygen | pH       | Turbidity | Water Temp | Phosphorus | Conductivity | Chloride  | Bacteria |
|---------------------------|---------------|------------------|----------|-----------|------------|------------|--------------|-----------|----------|
| <b>Milwaukee River</b>    | <b>C+</b>     | <b>A</b>         | <b>A</b> | <b>C</b>  | <b>A</b>   | <b>F</b>   | <b>F</b>     | <b>A</b>  | <b>F</b> |
| % meet target             | 77.3          | 93.9             | 99.0     | 74.7      | 100.0      | 53.1       | 7.9          | 96.6      | 45.5     |
| # samples                 | 4326          | 609              | 597      | 601       | 611        | 548        | 368          | 684       | 308      |
| <b>Menomonee River</b>    | <b>C-</b>     | <b>B+</b>        | <b>A</b> | <b>D+</b> | <b>A</b>   | <b>C</b>   | <b>F</b>     | <b>B-</b> | <b>F</b> |
| % meet target             | 70.4          | 87.1             | 100      | 66.7      | 100.0      | 74.3       | 2.5          | 82.1      | 28.2     |
| # samples                 | 4184          | 511              | 496      | 508       | 520        | 471        | 400          | 792       | 486      |
| <b>Kinnickinnic River</b> | <b>C</b>      | <b>B</b>         | <b>A</b> | <b>D-</b> | <b>A</b>   | <b>C-</b>  | <b>F</b>     | <b>B+</b> | <b>F</b> |
| % meet target             | 75.4          | 85.7             | 99.2     | 62.7      | 100.0      | 71.1       | 22.3         | 89.4      | 40.4     |
| # samples                 | 1999          | 244              | 242      | 244       | 248        | 246        | 215          | 424       | 136      |

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# The Year Ahead

It's a new year and spring is on the way. There are many things to look forward to at this time of year even though on some of the cold, dark winter days, it may feel like the frozen waters may never flow again. But we are in high gear at Milwaukee Riverkeeper getting ready for our 20th Anniversary River Cleanup and that makes anticipating spring much easier. I am amazed that even with our small staff (not including our dedicated interns and volunteers) we are able to run one of the largest volunteer events in the state! We could not do it without our site captains, our funders, our members, our volunteers and you! More on our cleanup in our next edition.

As the new year is swinging into full gear, we anticipate many important issues that will affect our rivers. Below is a brief summary of three priority issues for us. As always, we will need you, our river advocates, to be informed on these issues and help us be the voice of the river to achieve our mission of swimmable, fishable waters.

## Estabrook Dam

In 2012, as a result of our lawsuit, a Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge declared the Estabrook Dam a public nuisance. Since then, we have been waiting for the County to propose what the remedy should be. Late last year, the County's policy switched from repair to removal. Despite our hopes of possibly settling with the County on a dam removal plan, Milwaukee River Preservation Association (MRPA), a loud minority who supports dam repair, intervened in our lawsuit. As a result, a trial has been set for late July of this year on what the remedy should be to abate the nuisance. While we will be preparing for our evidentiary hearing over the next few months, where experts will testify about the problems caused by the dam and show that a free flowing river is the least expensive and only option

## A message from Jennifer Bolger Breceda, Executive Director

that will abate the nuisance, we will need public support too. Advocacy is usually never a one-time shot and while this issue has dragged on (many thanks to those who have diligently contacted your Supervisors over the years), we need to stay vigilant and keep our voice strong for the river.

## Great Lakes Diversion

The City of Waukesha applied to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to divert an average of 10 million gallons of water per day from Lake Michigan because its groundwater does not meet drinking water standards due to radium contamination. As part of its review, the WDNR will release an environmental impact statement or EIS that assesses the impact of the proposed diversion. We anticipate that the EIS will be released sometime this year. Milwaukee Riverkeeper is part of the Compact Implementation Coalition (CIC), a group of environmental organizations working for effective implementation of the Great Lakes Compact. CIC is not for or against diversions of water from the Great Lakes. CIC's goal is to protect the integrity of the Compact, which prohibits diversions except under limited circumstances and as a last resort; protects and manages this magnificent resource in a unified manner; and requires the adoption of strong water conservation measures.

Waukesha's application will set a precedent for all future water diversions out of the Great Lakes, for Wisconsin and the entire Great Lakes Region. Public comment and involvement will be essential here too, and again, we need you to help be the voice for our waters.

## Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)

A TMDL is the amount of a pollutant a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards. It creates a pollution "budget" for a water body and



establishes reductions needed from each pollutant source to meet water quality goals. A TMDL analysis is required by the EPA for all impaired water bodies. MMSD is developing TMDLs as a third party on behalf of the WDNR for the Menomonee, Kinnickinnic and Milwaukee Rivers, and the Estuary. The pollutants of interest are fecal coliform bacteria, phosphorus and sediment.

There is a stakeholder workshop tentatively planned for May 2015, at which the TMDL allocations will be presented and discussed. Thereafter, WDNR will hold additional focused stakeholder group meetings and public information sessions. They will then submit the TMDLs to USEPA for approval. Good implementation of the TMDLs will be critical to ensuring that our impaired waters achieve water quality standards. Public input will be critical here as well.

We will keep you informed as these important issues progress and as always, we thank you for your continued support and work toward swimmable, fishable waters.

To Healthy Rivers!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Bolger Breceda'.

Jennifer Bolger Breceda  
Executive Director

# Governor Walker Proposes Slash and Burn Budget

For those concerned about clean water, protection of our natural resources, and our economy, Governor Walker's proposed draft budget is a huge threat.

Water based tourism alone is estimated to be an \$8-12 billion industry in Wisconsin. We are second only to Florida in fishing and boat licenses. Yet, cuts go beyond what is reasonable and threaten our ability to ensure clean water, public health, and accountability.

The budget eliminates 66 staff from DNR, and goes after the science division the most aggressively, proposing to cut the 33 person staff by nearly half. Wisconsin has always prided itself on basing its regulatory and management decisions on sound science, but these cuts head our State in the wrong direction where politics override science. We have huge threats facing the state: climate change impacts; toxic algae blooms; invasive species; frac sand mines; and increasing "factory" farms, to name a few. This is not time to fire our State's scientists.

The Governor's draft budget proposes \$500,000 in cuts to nutrient management planning for farms (which helps minimize runoff of manure and other pollutants), as well as \$800,000 in cuts to the County Conservation staff who work with our farmers to implement best management practices

on agricultural lands. This program has been gutted over several decades, resulting in reduced funding for farmers and increased pollution to our waterways.

Per usual, several "budget" measures actually have little to do with the actual budget, but are rather, rollbacks of power to the DNR and the citizen-led Natural Resources Board (NRB). The NRB is made up of 7 citizens appointed by the Governor who approve, oppose, or modify DNR policy proposals and provide a venue for citizen input on agency actions. The Governor's proposal would strip all power from the NRB and make them advisory. The draft budget also strips all power from the Conservation Congress, which is made up of elected citizens that represent different user groups and recreational interests (making them advisory to the advisory NRB).

The budget proposes to freeze the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund until 2028, based on a justification that this is needed to minimize the debt service/interest paid on the land that DNR is purchasing. This program has strong public support (90% of Wisconsinites support this program per a Nature Conservancy poll). The Stewardship Fund also leverages funding from municipalities and private groups to protect important

natural areas for hunting, fishing, and recreation. It also helps protect parks and open space in our own backyards and along our rivers (e.g., Rotary Park, Three Bridges Park).

A few pieces of good news include retention of fees for ballast water inspections (which were set to retire), as well as funds for targeted runoff management bonds, contaminated sediment removal, and dam safety programs.

So what are the next steps? The Joint Finance Committee has already started debating the budget, legislative hearings will start in March, and likely go through May. The Legislature will vote on the budget and send it back to the Governor with revisions. Governor Walker will have the last say with line-item vetoes before signing the budget into law, which is likely to be in summer (there are efforts to push the budget through faster, but this seems unlikely).

Our State legislators and Governor need to hear from you! Protecting our natural resources should not be a partisan issue. The budget should ensure clean air, clean water, and protection of natural spaces that make this State a great place in which to live and work. Let's fight to protect Wisconsin.

## Meet Our Monitors



### Doug Day

**Where do you monitor?** North Ave and the Menomonee River in Wauwatosa

**How long have you been monitoring?** 1 year.

**Why do you monitor?** Because the fish do such a poor job of it.

**What is the craziest or most interesting thing you have seen when monitoring?** Having a Coho swim by during monitoring and seeing a weasel-like creature (a river otter?) feeding in the river at my site.

**Any other comments?** Love it. I would do this for free.

# Stop WisDOT's Proposed I-94 Expansion (Stop the Billion Dollar Boondoggle)

Milwaukee Riverkeeper submitted comments to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the reconstruction of I-94 between 70th and 16th Streets. The proposed cost is between \$825 million and \$1.15 billion for the project. Our biggest concerns are that the DEIS:

1. only considered expansion options (e.g., at grade or "double decker" options with differing alignments);
2. did not consider transit options;
3. failed to fully consider environmental justice impacts of highway expansion; and
4. failed to adequately consider the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of this project on water quality and the environment, especially in combination with other projects at the Zoo and Marquette Interchanges.

The DEIS states that impervious surfaces would increase by 11-22% as part of the West Segment Alternatives (west of Miller Park) and by 67-91% as part of the East Segment Alternatives (east of Miller Park)! This increase to impervious surfaces will increase stormwater runoff that will likely impact flood risk and water quality of the Menomonee River, as well as combined sewer capacity (stormwater east of 38th will likely go to the combined sewer). At time of print, WisDOT indicated its preferred alternative is to likely expand the highway at the existing grade and to keep

the current alignment of the East Segment, which would result in impervious surface increases at the lower end of the spectrum, but a drastic increase over just repairing the existing highway footprint with safety improvements. To read our comments, please visit: [milwaukeekeeper.org/content/wisdot](http://milwaukeekeeper.org/content/wisdot).

Milwaukee Riverkeeper is also a member of the Coalition for More Responsible Transportation (CMRT), which is composed of more than 25 organizations representing businesses, faith, environmental, and justice organizations that are building a public case against WisDOT's proposed highway expansion--an expansion we don't need and can't afford. We are advocating for reconstruction of the highway in its existing footprint.



Early rendering from WisDOT

## Support the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and State Revolving Loan Fund Programs

For the second year in a row, President Obama has proposed a \$50 million cut to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) for Fiscal Year 2016. The GLRI supports efforts to clean up toxic pollution, restore fish and wildlife habitat, combat invasive species, and reduce runoff from farms and cities. The GLRI has invested over \$1.9 billion in the Great Lakes States in the last 6 years, funding thousands of restoration projects including dredging of contaminated sediments from the lower Milwaukee River to removal of fish passage barriers in Ozaukee County, and many other restoration projects. Last year we were able to reverse efforts to reduce these funds. This year there are also efforts to stop these cuts and we hope to do so again.

The proposed EPA FY16 budget includes a combined \$2.3 billion in the Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Loan Funds. This includes a 23% decrease for sewage treatment infrastructure. This continues a long decline in funding for this important program that provides

low-interest loans for states and communities to improve infrastructure. The FY16 budget does include \$7 million to establish a new "Water Infrastructure and Resilience Finance Center," aimed at helping smaller communities identify financing opportunities.

Please urge your members of Congress to support increased funding for these important programs that are vital to maintaining clean water.





# RIVERKEEPER WATCH

From the log book of the Milwaukee Riverkeeper

## Remove the Beads, Please!

Two of the first bills being introduced into the Wisconsin Legislature (SB 15 and AB 15) are aimed at phasing out the manufacture and sale of microbeads--tiny pieces of plastic that are used in many soaps, scrubs, and toothpastes for exfoliation.

These microbeads are prolific in Lake Michigan (one study found 17,000 pieces of plastic per square km), and can be harmful to water quality and fish and other aquatic life. Fish ingest microbeads and they can get lodged in their guts.

Microbeads are made up of toxic chemicals, and can also attract toxins that can be carcinogenic, neurotoxic, or can affect endocrine/reproductive systems of fish and aquatic life. A recent study by Illinois/Indiana Seagrant found plastics in 17 different species of fish in Lake Michigan, and no species was found to be free of this contamination. Several hearings on these bills have occurred at the committee level already. Please contact your State Senators and Representatives and urge them to support SB 15 and AB 15.



## Protect our Groundwater (and Surface Water)!

A new bill that is circulating for co-sponsorship (LRB 1446) would severely limit solutions for groundwater protection. LRB 1446 would limit DNR's ability to regulate groundwater pumping in critical areas of the state by granting "forever" permits for high capacity wells. Regular review of permits as conditions change (e.g., due to climate or groundwater drops due to other wells) would be eliminated from DNR's authority.

This bill makes absolutely no sense. Our groundwater and surface water is inextricably connected, and over-pumping of groundwater is affecting our streams, fisheries, wells, and lakes. In addition, high volume water users such as farmers, municipalities, and other businesses also stand to pay the price for this short-sighted legislation because, in the end, they will lose their source of water for operations. This bill would also take away control from local municipalities that are trying to regulate or zone out water-intensive uses that are causing streams and lakes and water supplies to drop, especially in areas like the Central Sands. Please urge your State Legislators to vote against LRB 1446 .

On a positive note, in February an Act was introduced that would protect our rivers while still allowing for reasonable use of groundwater. The Groundwater Sustainability Act (LRB 0995/2) creates a mechanism to identify areas where groundwater withdrawals are not sustainable and then creates a plan to bring withdrawals back into balance. This legislation is science-based and balances the need for groundwater with the need to prevent harm to surface waters and citizens' property



Cheryl Nenn, Milwaukee Riverkeeper

rights. Please call your State Reps and Senators and ask them to cosponsor and support this bill.

## Protect Our Nation's Wetlands and Headwater Streams

Thank you to everyone who reached out to Congress to ask them to support the Clean Water Protection Rule (also known as Waters of the US). This rule will help protect nearly 1 million acres of Wisconsin's wetlands and thousands of miles of headwater streams by clarifying which waters are protected under the Clean Water Act!

There was a great showing of Congressional support for the protection of clean water on February 4th at the joint House-Senate hearing. EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy and Assistant Secretary of the Army Corps of Engineers Ellen Darcy debunked myths related to the rulemaking. They reassured Congress that the final rule is based on current peer reviewed science and that public comments will be incorporated into a final rule that is clear.

This rule still faces a long battle in Congress to be passed, so feel free to continue to contact your Federal Representative and Senators and express your support for clean water and for the Clean Water Protection Rule. More info on our website at [milwaukeekeeper.org/content/riverkeeper-supports-waters-us-rule](http://milwaukeekeeper.org/content/riverkeeper-supports-waters-us-rule).

## The Doctor Recommends a Low Salt Diet for Our Rivers

We are pleased that the City of Milwaukee is minimizing salt use this year both for the sake of the environment and to save money--by an estimated 2/5ths! You may have noticed that salting has been reduced on residential streets, and that salt is being mixed with sand on main streets to reduce salt usage, which is estimated at 1,200 tons per snow event.

According to a recent Smithsonian article, more than 22 million tons of salt are scattered on the roads of the U.S. annually—about 137 pounds of salt for every American. Past reports have shown that Milwaukee County uses 8 times more salt on average than the rest of the State.

All that salt has to go somewhere, and that is generally into our waterways. Chloride is toxic to aquatic life and impacts vegetation and wildlife. We find that many of our smaller creeks regularly exceed what are considered “safe” levels of chloride for fish and aquatic life. To read more about ways you can reduce your salt use at home, go here: [milwaukeekeeper.org/content/doctor-recommends-low-salt-diet-our-rivers](http://milwaukeekeeper.org/content/doctor-recommends-low-salt-diet-our-rivers).

## Stop the Asian Carp and Interbasin Transfer of Aquatic Invasive Species

Asian carp continue to knock on the door of the Great Lakes, based on eDNA sampling results released in January by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The sampling data, collected in October, show the presence of bighead or silver carp DNA throughout the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS). Most alarming is detection of carp DNA very near the lock in downtown Chicago – less than one city block from Lake Michigan.

Milwaukee Riverkeeper is working with a group of regional and national

Great Lakes partners to pressure the Army Corps of Engineers and Congress to take action to reduce the risk of invasive species moving between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River systems. The long-term solution is a permanent, ecological separation of these waters. In the short term, however, a bill has been introduced by Rep. Miller and Senator Stabenow of Michigan called the “Defending Our Great Lakes Act (HR 1135 and S 589).” Senator Baldwin has co-sponsored this bill that focuses on short-term, risk-reduction steps, such as designing a channel to be constructed in the approach to the Brandon Road lock on the CAWS that would reduce one-way movement of invasive species such as Asian Carp towards the Great Lakes.

We suggested improvements to this bill, as well as advocating for advancing long-term solutions to this issue such as ecological separation. In the meantime, approximately \$500,000 was proposed in the FY16 Federal Budget to the Army Corps to continue work on the Interbasin Study

(with several million in carryover from past years), and \$29 million was allocated for construction on the Asian Carp dispersal barrier project (e.g., electric barriers).

## Lincoln Park / Milwaukee River Dredging Update

Work to remove contaminated sediments from the Milwaukee River in Lincoln and Estabrook Parks is well underway! The sediment deposit just below the oxbows in Lincoln Park (deposit 3B-1 on attached figure) was completed at the end of January. Following the sediment removal, the wetland restoration and in-water habitat features (root wads and boulder clusters) were installed. Removal of the cofferdam surrounding this deposit downstream of the oxbows began February 6th. Work is now happening in the upstream most deposits (zone 7 on figure). Anyone skiing and skating on the river should avoid this area and proceed with caution. The ice is impacted by dewatering activities.



# 20th Annual Spring River Cleanup

## When?

Saturday, April 18th, 2015 from 9:00am-Noon, with the Trash Bash to follow!

## Where?

Come out to one of our 50 sites throughout Greater Milwaukee. See our list of sites at [www.milwaukeekeeper.org](http://www.milwaukeekeeper.org).

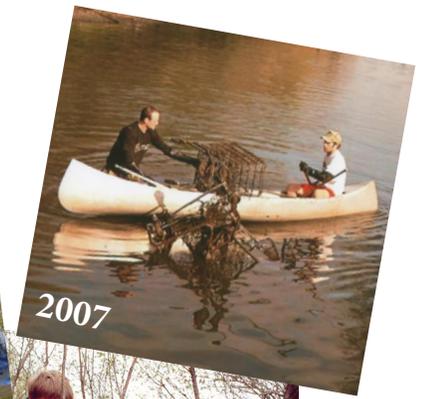
## Why?

Help us create cleaner, greener, and healthier rivers!

## How?

We provide the bags, gloves and FREE T-SHIRTS, and YOU provide the hands and energy to pick up trash, litter and the interesting and sometimes bizarre pieces of garbage that find their way into our beautiful river system. Grab a garbage bag and let's clean a river!

Register at [www.milwaukeekeeper.org](http://www.milwaukeekeeper.org) and find out how you can become a River Rock Star!



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