



# Illinois Coastal Management Program

Resources for a Healthy Lake Michigan Coast



*Winter at Kathy Osterman Beach, Chicago*

# Introduction

**Marc Miller**, *Director, Illinois Department of Natural Resources*

Northeast Illinois residents overwhelmingly select the Lake Michigan shoreline as one of their favorite parts of living here. More than 20 million people visit it annually and Lake Michigan provides drinking water to nearly 7 million Illinois residents—more than half of the state’s population.

Lake Michigan, this precious resource, nevertheless faces many challenges. Our partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (through the Coastal Management Program) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative) allows the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to play a more significant role in the protection, restoration and enhancement of our coastal resources.

The Illinois Lake Michigan Implementation Plan (ILMIP) is an innovative effort to identify critical and pressing issues as well as identify priorities that are most important for our new program to address. Experts, partners and stakeholders actively participated in this 2-year project, and this plan is designed to be a living document that will serve as a blueprint and guide for our future actions along the Illinois Coast.



# Miles of Magnificent Millions of Residents. Management



Sailing in  
Waukegan  
Harbor

Illinois' 63 miles of magnificent Lake Michigan shoreline define our region and our lives. It is the foundation of our state's economy, and seven million people—over half the population of Illinois—get their drinking water from Lake Michigan. Our shoreline today is a picture of extremes: heavily urbanized, yet containing some of the richest biodiversity in Illinois, including highly sensitive remnant dune habitats that are a major resting stop on critical bird migration routes. Our shoreline population is both very wealthy and extremely poor. Where it once contained bustling ports and industrial centers, today our coastal environment faces ongoing threats from legacy pollution and urban stormwater runoff whose impacts are intensifying with changes in our climate.

The **Illinois Coastal Management Program (ICMP)**, administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, is dedicated to protecting, restoring and managing the natural resources along our shoreline, thus contributing to the long-term economic development of our region. Established in 2012, Illinois' Coastal Management Program joins 29 coastal states and five island territories that have developed Coastal Management programs that work hand in hand with coastal communities to protect and enhance the nation's coastal regions.

## What We Do

Illinois has just 4% of the Lake Michigan coast, but 29% of the people in the Lake's basin. ICMP brings resources to help this most populated piece of coast, ultimately contributing to the improvement of the environmental and economic health of the whole Lake and region. To that end, ICMP has rigorously engaged partners, advisory groups and stakeholders to help define its focus and priorities. The ICMP's mission addresses coastal issues in the following priority areas:

- Invasive Species
- Habitat, Ecosystems and Natural Area Restoration
- Waukegan Area of Concern
- Contaminants and Toxins
- Sustainable Development
- Stormwater and Other Runoff
- Public Access and Recreation
- Economic Development
- Priority Rivers, Lakes and Harbors
- Climate Change

ICMP provides technical and support staff to assist with coastal projects, outreach and education. Further, ICMP implements a grants program to fund projects aimed at the protection and enhancement of coastal resources, and increasing awareness and knowledge of coastal issues and challenges.

Inevitably, issues and priorities change over time. ICMP is committed to making sure its work always reflects current needs and issues, and will review progress and reassess coastal resource priorities every three to five years. To establish the initial priorities, ICMP managed a partner-driven process to develop the **Illinois Lake Michigan Implementation Plan (ILMIP)**, described on page 6.

# Shoreline. One Visionary Program.



*Hegewisch Marsh,  
Chicago*

## The ICMP addresses our coast's priority issues through a series of initiatives:

**Coastal Grants:** ICMP provides federal funding for projects that preserve, protect or enhance Illinois' Lake Michigan coastal resources. Eligible funding categories include education and outreach, coastal planning, habitat management and restoration, small-scale construction and land acquisition.

**Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program:** ICMP coordinates with coastal stakeholders and partners to implement and promote practices that improve coastal water quality by preventing and capturing stormwater, nutrients and other pollutants before they reach the lake and waterways. The initiative includes the Clean Marina Program, which is a voluntary, incentive-based program to encourage marina operators and recreational boaters to protect coastal water quality.

**Coastal Resilience:** Resilience is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties or significant changes. Our Coastal Resilience initiative aims to increase the adaptability of our coastal communities by providing strong education and outreach about critical coastal issues and by supporting local governments with sustainable strategies to address coastal uses and needs.

**Federal Consistency:** ICMP reviews federal activities and federally funded projects for consistency with the Illinois Coastal Management Program to assure adequate oversight and coordination for projects that could affect the Illinois coast.

**Habitat Management:** ICMP supports work to improve and enhance terrestrial and aquatic habitats, including Lake Michigan nearshore and tributaries, for fish and wildlife in the Coastal Area. Focus areas include Illinois Beach State Park, Waukegan, Calumet region, river corridors and other areas of importance for regional biodiversity.

**Millennium Reserve:** ICMP works with this partnership to improve economic, environmental and community conditions in the Calumet region. This includes providing support and staffing for targeted projects including port revitalization, trail development, coordinated habitat management and stewardship networks; promoting regional tourism assets; and improving governmental coordination to address regional needs such as brownfield redevelopment, workforce development, community access to resources and stormwater management. We also promote and facilitate community-building projects such as urban farming and gardens, local energy production and innovative business ventures.

**Recreation and Access:** ICMP works with partners throughout the coast to improve access to the lake and area waterways. This includes improving, expanding and promoting trails; identifying, developing and promoting fishing access points; and providing access to information about recreational areas and opportunities. This also includes improving safety and reducing public exposure to coastal hazards, such as dangerous rip currents.



*63rd Street Beach, Chicago*



*Waukegan Harbor*

# Illinois Coastal Management

**T**he Illinois Coastal Management Program has a boundary that defines the area in which we work. The program boundary, which extends into Lake Michigan to the state line, has been subdivided into three distinct areas, based on watersheds that differ substantially from one another in terms of their landscape, patterns of human use and current coastal conservation issues.

The Northern area of the Illinois coast includes **Lake County and the North Shore**, and contains very high quality sand dune and lakeshore habitats and extensive ravine systems found nowhere else on the Illinois coast.

The Central area of Illinois' coast includes **Chicago and Evanston** in the basin of the Chicago River. Here the coastal boundary is very narrow along the lakeshore, but the boundary also encompasses the North Shore Channel and Chicago River to address the connection between the lake and the rivers. This section of the coast has been heavily modified and includes extensive hardening of the shore through the city.

The Southern area of the Illinois coast contains **South Chicago, Calumet and the Calumet River**, which was also heavily modified. Much of the land here was developed and industrialized in the early 20th Century, but many industries abandoned the region, leaving numerous brownfield sites. This watershed includes the modified remnants of two large natural lakes that once drained to Lake Michigan—Lake Calumet and Wolf Lake.



*Lake Michigan,  
Chicago*

# Program Defined

## 1 Northern

**Illinois Beach State Park** is one of the most visited state parks in Illinois, with over 2 million guests annually. ICMP works with park staff to assist with outreach and interpretation for visitors and also assists with habitat restoration at the park through technical support and staffing.

**Waukegan Harbor Area of Concern** is a 390-acre manmade harbor on Lake Michigan with a history of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination, and is a designated Area of Concern (AOC). ICMP has provided leadership in removing the six identified impairments so the Harbor can eventually be delisted as an AOC. The impairments for beach closings and fish and wildlife habitat have recently been removed, and all dredging has been completed to remove contaminated sediments.

**Bluff-ravine systems** are another key feature of this region. The topography and positioning of the ravine systems provide the right conditions for several threatened and endangered species of northern plants and trees rarely found this far south, including paper birch, white cedar, Canada buffalo berry, starflower and various orchids. Many of these species, already rare, have become rarer or have disappeared entirely, a result of a lack of management and degradation of the ravines under the pressures of urban development.

## 2 Central

**The Chicago River** was reversed in 1900 so that it now draws water from Lake Michigan and flows toward the Mississippi River system. The Lake's coastal area is still significantly influenced by stormwater along the shoreline and by interactions with the North Shore Channel, the Chicago River's North Branch and the lowest portion of its South Branch. ICMP is working with many partners to reduce stormwater runoff and other impacts to water quality in this area and throughout the coast.

**Chicago Lakeshore Parks** are the gateway to 26 miles of the lakeshore in the City of Chicago. The Chicago Park District owns and manages this area of the Illinois coast to provide recreation and leisure opportunities to the citizens and visitors of Chicago. This stretch of shoreline is heavily utilized and receives the most intensive and diverse recreational uses.

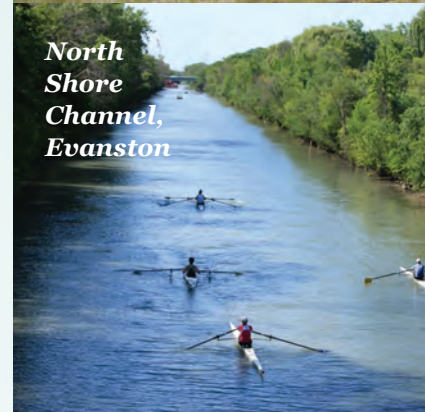
## 3 Southern

**William W. Powers State Recreation Area**, located in Chicago's far south side, is a destination for fishing, birding, winter sports and waterfowl hunting. ICMP staff engage the local community with park resources, and work with local school groups learning habitat restoration through the Mighty Acorns program. ICMP has also worked with partners to establish Urban Biodiversity Week, an annual celebration connecting local residents to William W. Powers and nearby parklands.

**Millennium Reserve** is an initiative involving over 60 public and private partners working to unify and accelerate conservation, economic development and community development efforts in a 220-square mile area of the Calumet region, including the southern third of the Illinois Coastal Program area. In its first two years, ICMP played a key role in developing a shared partnership structure for Millennium Reserve, launching partner communications, prioritizing regional projects, providing financial and technical support for partner-driven projects and developing an action agenda.



*Waukegan Dunes*



*North Shore Channel, Evanston*

*Photo courtesy of Metropolitan Planning Council/Abby Crisostomo*



*Cal-Sag Channel, Blue Island*

## GET INVOLVED

**ICMP can only protect and restore the Illinois Lake Michigan shoreline if communities and stakeholders get involved. Here's how:**

- ➔ **Join our email list;** send request to [DNR.CMP@illinois.gov](mailto:DNR.CMP@illinois.gov)
- ➔ **Apply for a Coastal Grant** (if eligible)—see page 8 for more information
- ➔ **Contact us** for technical assistance on your coastal project at [DNR.CMP@illinois.gov](mailto:DNR.CMP@illinois.gov)
- ➔ **Visit our website** for more general information about the Illinois Coastal Management Program, at [www.dnr.illinois.gov/cmp](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/cmp)

# Illinois Lake Michigan Planning for Success in

*South Shore Cultural  
Center Wetland, Chicago*



## GOALS

### The Illinois Lake Michigan Implementation Plan Goals

The Illinois Lake Michigan Implementation Plan (ILMIP) helps guide ICMP's direction. Completed in 2013, it sets programmatic and funding priorities for the Coastal Grants program for the next three to five years. Additional goals of this planning process included:

- ➔ testing the feasibility of using wiki technology as a tool to empower a broader, more engaged and demographically diverse stakeholder group
- ➔ building stronger partnerships through the sharing of best management practices, knowledge, tools and other resources
- ➔ bringing in experts and stakeholders to help set priorities for ICMP

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**A**s a new program for the state, the Illinois Coastal Management Program has the opportunity to build upon the strong foundation that our partners have laid for the future of the Lake Michigan coast. Our lasting success requires diverse stakeholder engagement, established priorities and shared resources.

That's why ICMP used a stakeholder-driven effort to identify regional priority issues to write the **Illinois Lake Michigan Implementation Plan (ILMIP)**. This planning tool guides the ICMP's work in all its programs, especially the Coastal Grants program. A planning grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) provided the funding to develop the ILMIP, which will help guide ICMP priorities for three to five years.

With a dynamic, urban shoreline, the Illinois coastal area requires a dynamic management plan. ICMP used internet tools, including a wiki (a collaborative website) and an online forum to keep the content transparent and accessible. To make sure the plan's priorities reflect the needs of the varied landscape types throughout the Illinois coastal area, we divided the region into three sections and developed priorities for each: Northern, Central and Southern. (See map on page 4.)

### Engaging partners and stakeholders

Any good plan for the Illinois Coast must reflect the on-the-ground needs of the coastal region. ICMP worked collaboratively with four lead partners—Alliance for the Great Lakes, Bluestem Communications, Chicago Wilderness and Environmental Consulting and Technology, Inc.—to engage with other groups and initiatives in the region to make sure the implementation plan reflects the diverse needs of Illinois' shoreline communities. The team worked with a group of about 40 Advisory Working Group (AWG) members, representing the geographical diversity of the coast through workshops, a survey, the wiki and an online engagement forum. AWG members reviewed content, contributed data and background on the wiki and provided feedback throughout the two-year planning process.

#### The Wiki

At the heart of the planning process is a wiki, an interactive online tool used to gather, edit and store data and information on the Illinois coastal program area. All stakeholders in the region were, and continue to be, invited to add pages and edit others on the wiki at <http://1.usa.gov/17Gg4au>. While the ILMIP set priorities for a specific timeframe, the wiki will live on as an important repository, and will serve as the basis for future updates to the ILMIP and ICMP program priorities.

#### IllinoisCoastalPriorities.org

ICMP needed to prioritize the issues to understand where its efforts can best serve the needs of the Illinois coast. The ILMIP process used an online forum at this site, powered by MindMixer, to gauge stakeholder priorities for the region.



# Implementation Plan: our Region

## Illinois Coastal Management Program Priorities

Through the stakeholder engagement process, coastal stakeholders have identified priority objectives that will help focus ICMP grants and efforts for the next three to five years. Throughout the Coastal Program area, ICMP will focus on projects that:

- Restore and improve riparian areas, lakes and streams as habitat for birds, fish and wildlife, including expanding protection and restoration of nearshore aquatic habitat.
- Use green infrastructure and other strategies to manage stormwater and reduce runoff.
- Improve and coordinate regional collaboration on invasive species management to control terrestrial and aquatic invasive species and improve ecological conditions.

In addition to the big-picture priorities for the whole region, stakeholders identified objectives for each section of the Illinois coast, which reflect the environmental diversity of our shoreline.



*Fish Sampling,  
Waukegan Dunes*

Illinois Coastal Geographic Area	Participant-designated Top Three Priorities
<b>Northern</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the connectivity among core areas of natural lands</li> <li>• Increase recreational access to waterways and beaches</li> <li>• Link water and land-based trails and facilities</li> </ul>
<b>Central</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve habitat value of urbanized areas including neighborhoods</li> <li>• Restore and improve riparian areas, lakes and streams as habitat for birds, fish and wildlife, including expanding protection and restoration of near shore aquatic habitat</li> <li>• Use green infrastructure and other strategies to manage stormwater, reduce runoff volumes and frequency of untreated sewage release</li> </ul>
<b>Southern</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve hydrologic regimes to more natural conditions</li> <li>• Protect and increase interconnected open space, especially along priority waterways</li> <li>• Support rehabilitation and redevelopment of brownfield and old industrial sites</li> </ul>

The Waukegan Harbor Area of Concern (AOC), located in the “Northern” region, has a dedicated and active team of local residents—the Citizens’ Advisory Group—who work diligently to address the history of contamination and environmental issues in the Harbor. AOC-specific priorities reflect the unique challenges of this area. Top stakeholder-objectives for the Waukegan AOC are:

- Maintain and improve terrestrial habitat for native plants and animals
- Improve beach health and reduce beach closures
- Reduce impacts of contaminants on humans and wildlife

# Addressing the ILMIP Priorities:

One of the greatest benefits of the newly established Illinois Coastal Management Program is our access to formerly untapped federal funding. Our program has brought new staff and funding to the region to focus efforts on our invaluable coastal resources. These funds are specifically dedicated to improving health, vitality and sustainability along the Illinois coast. The Coastal Grants Program is a great way to leverage other regional opportunities to do habitat protection and restoration, education and outreach and green stormwater management within your communities, and the priorities established in the ILMIP will help guide our grant decisions.

Many stakeholders, along with ICMP, have used the ILMIP wiki to input data and information and identify coastal priorities; all of this information remains available online via the wiki. That means groups applying for grants have a world of information at their fingertips to support their application needs.

As we continue to make progress and achieve successes in the Illinois coast, our priorities and needs will change. Therefore, we will be updating our plans and priorities at least every five years, and will make every effort to continue to engage our partners in the region to establish those priorities at regular intervals.

## What Does This Mean for You?

ICMP funds local projects to preserve, protect and enhance the Illinois coast every year. Units of government and nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for and receive funds. Other states with coastal management programs have awarded grants to:

- provide education and outreach on coastal topics
- implement small-scale construction projects such as boardwalks and boat launches
- plan and create beach access points
- reinvigorate waterfront areas
- prevent and monitor beach erosion
- provide assistance for local planning in coastal areas

The types of activities that can be funded are broadly defined and will be left to the creativity of grant applicants, as long as the goals of the ICMP are addressed and the projects occur within the ICMP coastal boundary.



*William W. Powers State Recreation Area, Chicago*



*Water Quality Sign  
North Point Marina, Winthrop Harbor*

# The Coastal Grants Program

## Illinois Coastal Management Grants Program

### Who can apply?

**Units of government, educational institutions and 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations working within the Illinois Coastal Program area** can apply for grants for environmental education and outreach, planning, signage and workshops. All projects must be for public benefit and must help to preserve, protect or enhance Illinois' Lake Michigan coastal resources.

**Starting in 2015, units of government within the Illinois Coastal Program area** can apply for grants for land acquisition, small-scale construction projects, and habitat restoration.

### What types of projects are funded?

#### Examples include:

Creation or expansion of environmental education programs, interpretive displays/signs, outreach campaigns, sustainable coastal planning and workshops. Must be on Illinois Lake Michigan Coastal topics.

**Starting in 2015, grant categories will include:** land acquisition and easements for public access, resource protection and improvement; habitat restoration; invasive species management; access and small-scale (<\$100,000) construction projects such as informational kiosks, boardwalks, pathways and fences.

For more grant information, visit:  
<http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/cmp/Pages/grants.aspx>

### When to apply?

Application schedule and award dates vary. Join our email list by writing to [DNR.CMP@illinois.gov](mailto:DNR.CMP@illinois.gov) or visit our website for information on Requests for Proposals.



*Chicago Lakeshore Path*

ICMP can only protect and restore the Illinois Lake Michigan shoreline if communities and stakeholders get involved.

Here's how:

- ➔ Join our email list; send request to [DNR.CMP@illinois.gov](mailto:DNR.CMP@illinois.gov)
- ➔ Apply for a Coastal Grant (if eligible)
- ➔ Contact us for technical assistance on your coastal project at [DNR.CMP@illinois.gov](mailto:DNR.CMP@illinois.gov)
- ➔ For more general information about the Illinois Coastal Management Program, view our website at [www.dnr.illinois.gov/cmp](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/cmp)

## LEARN MORE

To learn more about the priority issues, and the objectives that address the issues, check out the ICMP wiki:  
<http://1.usa.gov/17Gg4au>

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