



RIVER VOICE

Issue 17

November 2015

A Note from the Executive Director

Greetings!

As some of you may already know, I was recently appointed as the new Executive Director for the St. Louis River Alliance where I have actually worked for almost 4 years as a project manager. Our organization has worked on restoring this estuary and river for 20 years with many organizations and agencies. You, our members, provide a voice for the river which is the largest U.S. tributary to Lake Superior.

True to our mission, our organization is taking the lead in a time-sensitive project to secure the funds to manage polluted riverbed sediment and industrial waste in the estuary. For the first time, strategic partnerships and dedicated federal funding are lined up to make this restoration possible for the headwaters of Lake Superior. Securing state funding at this time is crucial, due to the limited-time availability of a 65% federal cost share match. The SLRA is seeking to raise \$150,000 to help ensure that an estimated \$72 million in state bonding and federal funds are secured for this project. This clean-up effort will not only protect water quality at the head of Lake Superior, but will enhance economic vitality in Minnesota. To be successful we need you! With your support we can help make sure the appropriate funds are directed to this restoration.

When I was a young child, my family would travel through Duluth up to the North Shore. I used to see the industry pollution and ask my parents why people were dumping waste into the lake and the river. It has always weighed on my heart. I have been pulled to Lake Superior my whole life, and in moving here, my heart's desire was to be able to work on cleaning up the lake from the damage done by these legacy pollutants.

My mind could never have constructed the path I am on now, but my heart did. We are now in the process of creating a coalition and raising funds to ensure that we can execute the largest clean-up effort in the estuary since 1970's. I wanted to share my personal story because all of you love this lake as much as I do! I am personally donating to this cause, and hope that you will become members to show your support, or make a donation through our page. Thank you for joining us as we continue to protect, restore, and enhance the St. Louis River.

Sincerely,

Kris Eilers, Executive Director



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St. Louis County Waters Soon to have a New Line of Defense Against Aquatic Invasives

With over 1,100 lakes in St. Louis County there are many areas for aquatic invasive species. Beginning this spring St. Louis County will have a new line of defense against aquatic invasive species. Through St. Louis County's Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program, the St. Louis River Alliance, a grant from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) and the St. Louis River Alliance are developing an **Aquatic Invasive Species Sentry Program** to help guard against aquatic invasives. The program, taught by AIS instructors, consists of hands-on field surveys, classroom workshops, with a unique approach—sentry participants will be surveying for AIS in 100 lakes and rivers within St. Louis County. The AIS Sentry Program provides participants with skills to:

- lake and river ecology,
- how to identify common aquatic plants and animals both native and invasive,
- how invasive species are introduced; their impacts on our natural resources,
- how to conduct surveys of native and invasive species on the water, and reporting methods.

The goals of the program—to educate and empower community members in recognizing and reporting aquatic invasive species throughout St. Louis County—a first line of defense in limiting the spread of aquatic invasive species. Upon completion of the program, sentries will be asked to survey 2 additional bodies of water during the summer and fall seasons and report their findings. Aquatic invasive species, once introduced and established they can cause great harm to our natural resources. Education is essential in preventing new introductions and spread of Aquatic Invasive Species in St. Louis County.

Aquatic Invasive Species Sentry Workshops begin this spring and continue through the summer.

For further program information please contact: Jill DiDomenico, Project Coordinator at jill@stlouisriver.org. Phone: 218 733-9520.

Become an Aquatic Invasive Species Sentry!



Against Aquatic Invasive Species

invasive species to enter and spread.
invasives. With funding from St. Louis
Alliance along with its partners, MN Sea
Grant—**a** citizen volunteer program to
consists of classroom and field training
opportunities while paddling on lakes and rivers
to increase awareness and knowledge on:

economy and public health

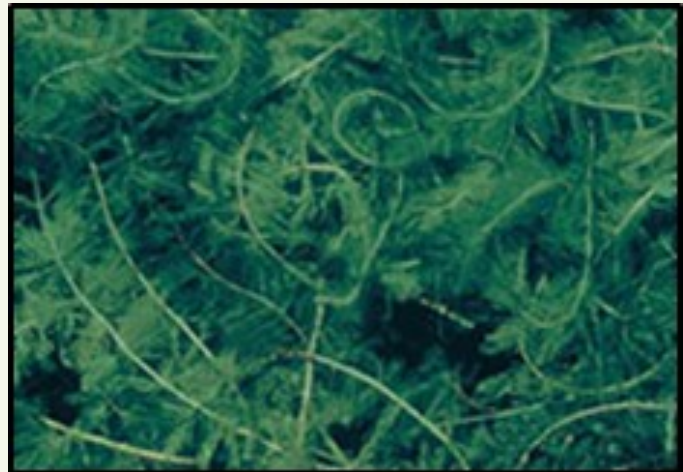
recognizing and reporting aquatic
invasives and preventing their spread. Upon
arrival of water within St. Louis County during
the summer months are a threat to our waters. Once AIS
are established, they can harm the environment,
economy and public health.
Identifying and reporting Aquatic Invasive Species throughout St. Louis

throughout the summer.

Coordinator, St. Louis River Alliance,



Zebra Mussels



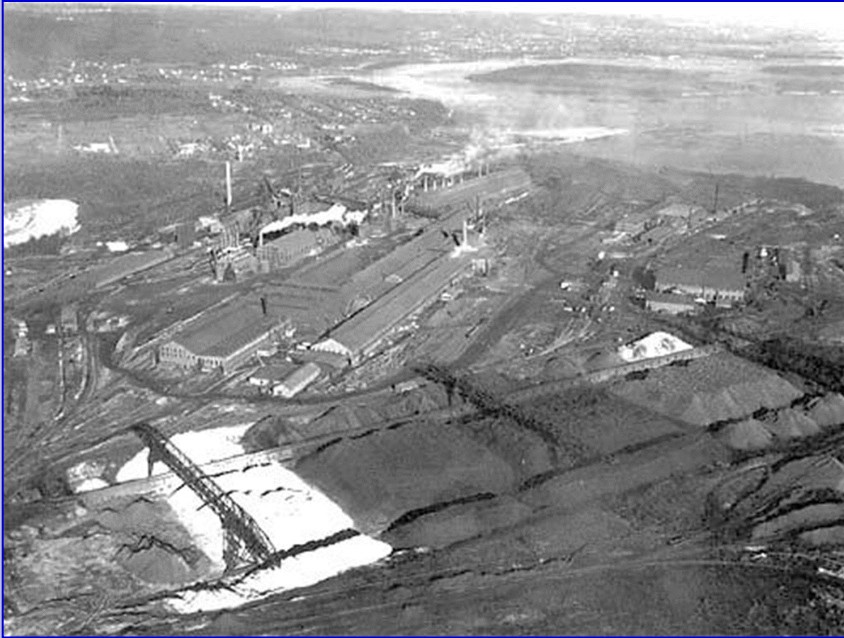
Eurasian watermilfoil



Spiny waterfleas

FEATURED SITE: ST. LOUIS RIVER

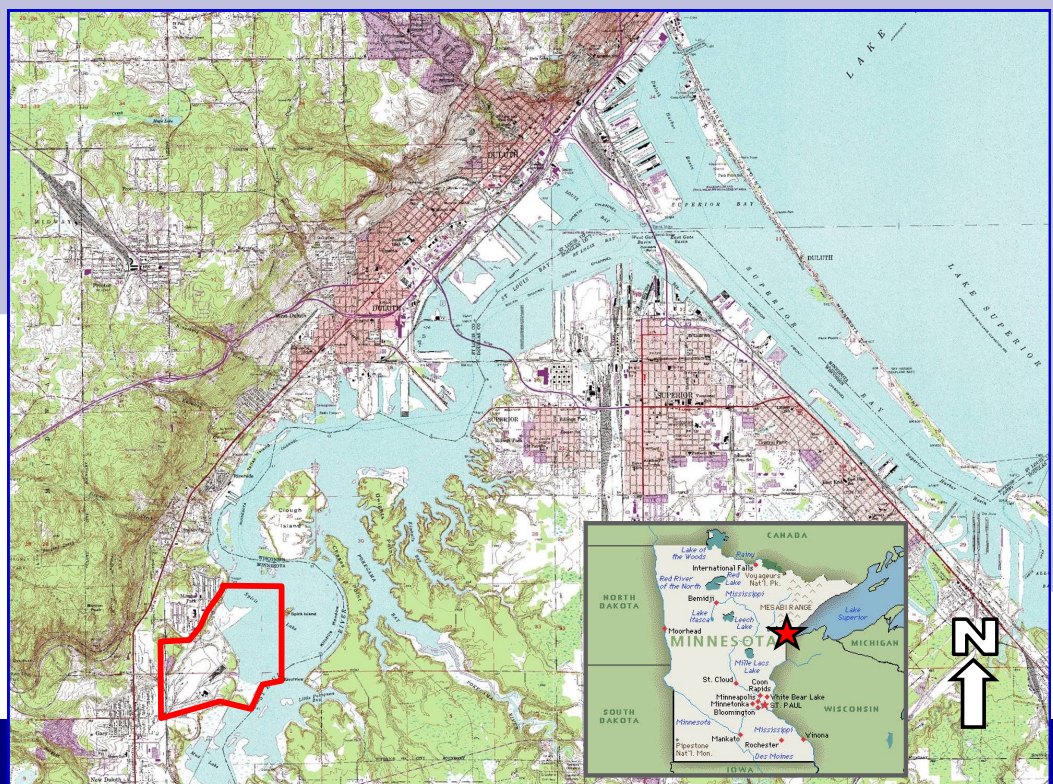
The US Steel site is located along the St. Louis River in West Duluth adjacent to the Morgan Park neighborhood. The site was an integrated steel mill (known as the Duluth Works) consisting of coke production, iron and steel making, casting, primary rolling and roughing, hot and cold finishing, and galvanizing. The steel mill and coke production facility operated from 1915 until 1979 and made steel products such as nails, wire, and steel sign posts. The majority of the operation was closed in 1979, and the blast furnaces, open hearth furnaces, fuel oil storage tanks, and a portion of the rolling mill were demolished. By 1988, the material storage area and most of the remaining buildings were demolished. By 1999, the Wire Mill and several smaller buildings used for storage were also removed. Currently, the only structure remaining is a small shed near the site entrance; this and concrete pads and roads are the only remaining surficial features.



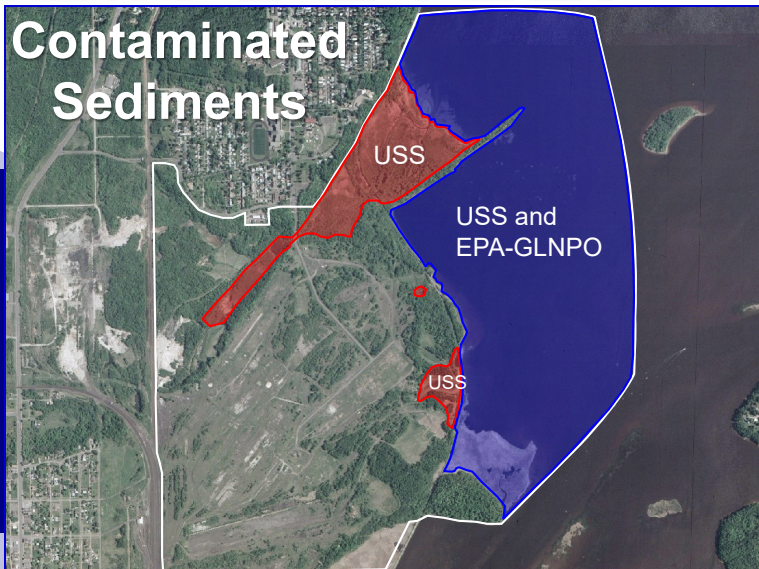
The history of industrial activity at the site resulted in numerous releases of contaminants to site soils, sediments, and groundwater. US Steel became a federal and state Superfund site and was placed on the US EPA National Priority List and the MPCA Permanent List of Priorities in 1985. The 1989 Record of Decision outlined remedial actions required to address these contaminated areas. In the 1990s, numerous cleanup actions occurred, including removal of waste materials and contaminated soil, solidification and capping of tar-contaminated soils, and limited removal of contaminated sediments. However, ongoing reviews indicated additional investigation and remediation was necessary to address the risks to human health and the environment from contaminated aquatic sediments on the upland portion of the site, and in the adjacent

The US Steel site is considered one of the priority remediation sites in the St. Louis River Area of Concern (AOC). Cleanup of the contaminated sediments at the site will assist with removal of beneficial use impairments and ultimately delisting of the AOC. Because the site is within the AOC, it is eligible for funding through the Great Lakes Legacy Act program, administered by US EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO). The purpose of the Legacy Act program is to expedite cleanup of legacy contaminants in sediments in Great Lakes AOCs by providing a cost share to assist with investigation and cleanup activities. US Steel entered into a project agreement with GLNPO for sediment investigation, feasibility study, and remedial design for the St. Louis River Spirit Lake portion of the Site. The contaminated sediments on the upland portion of the site are not eligible for Legacy Act funding, and that portion of the work has been conducted by US Steel in accordance with the 1985 Consent Order issued by the MPCA.

The Sediment Remedial Investigation Report, completed in 2013, was prepared to characterize the magnitude and extent of contaminated sediments in the upland areas and in the estuary adjacent to the site. A total of approximately 1.7 million cubic yards of sediments exceed the MPCA preliminary remediation goals for the contaminants at the site, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and metals. Of that total, about 600,000 cubic yards within a 300-acre study area are located in the Spirit Lake section of the St. Louis River Estuary. The remaining one million plus cubic yards are within the 500-acre upland portion of the site in ponds, wetlands, and stream corridors that are adjacent



ER/U.S. STEEL



The results of the investigation were used to prepare a feasibility study to develop and evaluate remedial alternatives to address the risks to human health and the environment from sediment contamination at the Site. The Revised Feasibility Study for the former Duluth Works and Spirit Lake sediment site was completed in July 2015. It also includes several impacted soil units adjacent to sediment units, which will be incorporated into the sediment cleanup. The alternatives incorporate a variety of methods of addressing the contamination, including excavation/dredging, capping and thin covers, and creation of confined disposal facilities. The alternatives also incorporated opportunities for habitat restoration and better storm water management.

During the feasibility study process, eleven remedial alternatives were developed with involvement and input from MPCA, GLNPO, resource managers, tribal representatives, and other stakeholder groups. As part of GLNPO's formal tribal consultation under Section 106 under the National Historic Preservation Act, an additional alternative (Alternative 12) was created to address tribal concerns. These concerns included the spiritual significance of Spirit Lake in their culture, as well as a desire for wild rice restoration opportunities. After an initial screening, five alternatives were retained for a detailed evaluation, and US Steel identified Alternative 8 as their preferred alternative. MPCA requested input on the five alternatives from the project stakeholders, and different organizations stated a preference for either Alternative 8 or 12.

In order to address the competing interests of the resource managers and major project stakeholders, GLNPO hosted a meeting in September to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to share their concerns with each other, with the goal of reaching consensus on a cleanup plan. The outcome of this meeting was the proposal of two additional hybrid alternatives. The details of the proposed hybrid alternatives are in development, and will be shared with the project stakeholders once they are available. After opportunity for stakeholder review and comment on the new hybrid alternatives, MPCA and GLNPO hope to move forward with a proposed sediment cleanup plan for the site. This plan will be detailed in a document that will be provided to the public for review and comment. There will be a public notice of the proposed plan once it is available, and a public meeting will be held to provide additional information about the proposed plan. MPCA will solicit public input on the plan during a 30-day public comment period.

At the conclusion of the public comment period, MPCA will review the comments and make a final decision on the selection of a remedy, which will be documented in a Final Cleanup Plan. A summary of significant comments, criticisms, and new relevant information along with the MPCA's response to those comments will be included in a responsiveness summary document. After a final decision is reached on the sediment cleanup plan, US Steel and GLNPO will enter into a project agreement for remedy implementation. Prior to the beginning of remedy construction, there are many steps that will need to be completed. The appropriate permits will need to be obtained, remedial design activities will determine how best to construct the remedy, property access agreements will need to be finalized, and contractors will need to be lined up for the project. There will be additional public information meetings during the permitting and design phases. There will also be public meetings prior to and during remedy construction. Monitoring activities will be required during and after remedy construction to ensure conditions remain protective of human health and the environment during the short-term and long-term. Currently, the project is anticipated to take a minimum of two full construction seasons to complete, and construction could begin as early as late 2016.

If you would like additional information about the US Steel site, please visit the MPCA's website: <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/mvri83b>. You can also contact the site project manager, **Erin Endsley**, at erin.endsley@state.mn.us or 218-302-6619. Please request to be added to the site mailing list if you would like updates on when the Proposed Plan is available or when the public meeting will be scheduled.

Connecting People to the River

Why SLRA Membership Matters

Your 2015 Membership helped to

- host 16 St. Louis River Alliance Events, including 6 Piping Plover presentations, the canoe tour, educational open houses for the public to learn about the Area of Concern, and the Annual Boat Tour.
- reach 1,155 community members with education programs.
- plant 400 pounds of Wild Rice in sheltered waters around Clough Island.
- revitalize the River Voice newsletter and expand SLRA social and traditional media to discuss river issues.
- promote and maintain 11 Monofilament Fishing Line Recycling Bins around Duluth and Superior which have collected over 2000 feet of line!
- start two new Aquatic Invasive Species initiatives dealing with early detection and continued work in the estuary to prevent the spread of nonnative phragmites and other invasive species.

Photo by Kim Berg



KBerg



Thank you to the following businesses and organizations for supporting our work by becoming a River Partner:



River Protector Level

Great Blue Heron Level



sappi

Lake Sturgeon Level

River Otter Level





Watch for more information on these upcoming events!

St. Louis River Alliance Gala Fundraiser

Feb. 18th 2016, 5:30-8:00 pm @ Clyde Iron Works

St. Louis River Alliance Walk on the River

Winter 2016

Contact Us

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