



# St. Clair River Remedial Action Plan - Beneficial Use Impairments Status Report

The St. Clair River is one of 43 locations in the Great Lakes Basin that the International Joint Commission (IJC) has designated—or “listed”—as an “Area of Concern” (AOC) because of what are known as “Beneficial Use Impairments” (BUIs).

Fortunately, the river is a dynamic, flowing watercourse that is healthier than it was a few years ago. We are making progress toward our goal of improving and protecting water uses and getting the river “delisted”, and no longer an “Area of Concern”.

## Beneficial Use Impairments

Of 14 beneficial uses in the St. Clair River, eight are “impaired,” three “require further study” to determine their current status and three are “not impaired.” See list below.

### Impairments

- Restrictions on drinking water consumption
- Beach closings
- Restrictions on fish and wildlife consumption
- Loss of fish and wildlife habitat
- Restrictions on dredging activities
- Degradation of benthos
- Degradation of aesthetics
- Added cost to agriculture or industry

### Needed to “delist”

- prevent chemical spills
- reduce *E. Coli* bacteria
- reduce contaminants
- protect existing habitat, restore more hectares
- manage/remove contaminated sediment
- improve habitat
- confirm no floating scums or oily sheens
- conduct user survey

### Requires Further Assessment

- Degradation of fish and wildlife populations
- Fish tumours and other deformities
- Bird or animal deformities or reproductive problems

- complete studies
- complete studies
- summarize completed studies and confirm status

### Not Impaired

- Fish and wildlife flavour
- Water eutrophication
- Phytoplankton and zooplankton populations

***The environment is our ultimate infrastructure, and the St. Clair River is the Blue Water Area’s most significant natural feature. We must appreciate and improve the St. Clair River so we can use it beneficially.***

***Please join us in the effort.***

## People want to know ???

### Can we drink the water?

Not directly, but municipalities do treat water from the river making it safe for human consumption.

### Can we eat the fish?

Yes, but in moderation, due to chemical pollution; observe Ontario MNR guidelines.

### Can we swim at the beaches?

Yes, but observe occasional beach closing warnings, especially after heavy rain events.

## What You Can Do

- Repair defective septic systems.
- Prevent the flow or seepage of phosphorus, nitrogen, other harmful chemicals, fertilizers and manure into urban storm water drains and rural waterways.
- Plant natural vegetation along eroding stream banks and keep livestock out of waterways.
- Participate in habitat restoration projects.
- Observe fish consumption advisories.
- Observe signs at beaches warning of intermittent pollution.
- Encourage federal, provincial and local government agencies to continue river monitoring and to increase resources for environmental activities.
- Encourage municipalities to implement river improvement policies and projects.
- Be aware of and respect your water resources.

For more information, visit the Friends of the St. Clair River website

[www.friendsofstclair.ca](http://www.friendsofstclair.ca)