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Bush signs Great Lakes cleanup bill

By OLIVER MOORE
Globe and Mail
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Local U.S. governments, states and Indian tribes are getting access to up to \$250-million (U.S.) of funding earmarked for cleaning up the polluted bottom of the Great Lakes.

U.S. President George W.

Bush signed the legislation in Washington on Wednesday, assuring grants for local partners willing to put up 35 per cent worth of matching funds.

The money, to be rolled out over five years, is intended for cleaning, monitoring and preventing contaminated sediment in the Great Lakes basin — sediment which research shows can raise the cancer risk in people and also cause tumours, impaired reproduction and birth defects in fish and fish-eating birds.

According to the Council of Great Lakes Industries, dredging, treating and disposing of one cubic yard of contaminated sediment costs anywhere from \$50 (U.S.) to \$1,800 — the median cost is \$300-\$450 a cubic yard.

Earlier this year, the Ontario government kicked in \$50-million (Canadian), also over five years, for the rehabilitation of the Great Lakes.

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Queen's Park said it would add increase financing for the Ontario Great Lakes Renewal Foundation, which works to secure funding partnerships that will help restore the Great Lakes ecosystem. Contributions are used to rehabilitate shorelines, clean up contaminated sediments, prevent pollution, reduce contaminant runoff from urban and rural sources, promote water conservation and support research.

Another threat to the Great Lakes is the the Asian carp, a voracious alien species introduced to the United States 30 years ago by an Arkansas fish farmer.

A recent U.S.-Canada commission on shared waterways raised concerns that the big-eating species, which can grow to a metre long and weigh as much as 50 kilograms, steals food from the bottom of the food chain and deprives native species of nutrition.

At least three Asian carp have been found in the Great Lakes, two on the U.S. side of Lake Erie and one on the Canadian side.



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