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Senate OKs bill for lakes

Measure could mean \$10M a year in fed funds to clean Lake St. Clair; it moves to House panel.

Jim Lynch / The Detroit News

Legislation that could mean \$10 million a year in federal assistance for Lake St. Clair cleanup has passed the U.S. Senate and now moves on for consideration by a joint congressional committee.

The Water Resources Development Act supports efforts in improving navigation, restoring ecosystems and reducing flood and storm damage in states across the nation. For Michigan and the Great Lakes region, several projects could receive a needed boost.

Locally, the big winner would be Lake St. Clair, which could use the \$10 million to implement cleanup measures in a partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers.

"It will help a lot," said Doug Martz, chairman of the Macomb Water Quality Board. "For years, Lake St. Clair has been a lot like the lost stepchild of the Great Lakes region."

The package also includes projects for Menominee Harbor on Lake Michigan and Luna Pier on Lake Erie.

"Pollution, invasive species, low water levels and other challenges have troubled the Great Lakes and other Michigan waterways," Sen. Carl Levin, co-chairman of the Senate's Great Lakes Task Force, said in a statement.

"We have made great progress to confront these issues, but much work remains. The provisions that we requested for the Great Lakes and Michigan which were included in the (act) will help our efforts to preserve and protect our precious water."

A version of the legislation passed the House of Representatives last year, and now the differences will need to be ironed out by a joint committee. It's not clear if and when a joint committee session on the legislation will be called.

"That's a leadership call," said Steve Hansen, director of communications for the House committee on transportation and infrastructure.

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