

## Habitat Problems in White Lake

### Habitat related impairments in White Lake

Loss of fish and wildlife habitat and degraded fish and wildlife populations are two problems, termed Beneficial Use Impairments, that have been identified in White Lake, as part of its designation as a Great Lakes Area of Concern.



*Phragmites along White Lake's shoreline*

### Background

Historically, White Lake supported a diverse system of shoreline habitats, including coastal wetlands, freshwater marshes, wetland bays, aquatic plant beds, and shoreline stands, due to its status as a drowned river mouth lake. Since European settlement of the White Lake area in the mid-1800s, the assemblage of plants and animals gradually changed as habitat loss occurred and accelerated dramatically in the past 50 years due to residential and industrial development, wetland filling, and historical fill placed within the lake. This increased fragmentation and degradation of shoreline habitat, helped to allow the introduction of invasive plants, and decreased fish and wildlife populations.

### What's been done

Focus on addressing the fish and wildlife habitat related impairments began with a study of aquatic plants in 1995, followed by an evaluation of the quality and types of lakeshore habitat in 1996, and a more specific assessment of fish and waterfowl aquatic habitat in 2000. In 2005, information from these studies was used to develop a "blueprint" for restoring shoreline habitat. In 2010, the Muskegon Conservation District, with the White Lake Public Advisory Council, received a \$2.1 million grant to restore the priority shoreline sites identified as a result of this series of studies.

### The good news!

These two habitat-related Beneficial Use Impairments can be removed as problems in White Lake in 2012 with the completion of this project, helping White Lake to be delisted as a Great Lakes Area of Concern.