

Sheboygan River dredging, restoration nears completion

Work near Eighth Street bridge to be done by Christmas

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Written by
Josh Lintereur

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Work crews are nearing the end of a four-month-long project to dredge tainted sediments from the Sheboygan River and restore habitat there, city officials said Monday.

Dredging work in the river upstream of the Eighth Street bridge will wrap up this week, while work in the inner harbor up to the Eighth Street bridge will be completed by Christmas, officials say. Machinery used in the project will be moved out over the course of the winter, as weather conditions permit.

“As long as the weather holds, they’ll continue to get equipment dismantled and things cleaned up,” said Chad Pelishek, the city’s development manager.

The only remaining work is scheduled for spring, when a barge will be out on the water to spread sand over the dredged portion of the river, with the sand acting as a cap for any remaining pollutants still in the riverbed. That work could take about a month, but it won’t impact boaters, Pelishek said.



An information session will be held Wednesday to update the public on the project's status. The half-hour meeting begins at 5:30 p.m. at the University of Wisconsin-Extension Sheboygan County on the University of Wisconsin-Sheboygan campus.

The dredging project, which began in August, is the final step in a 25-year process of cleaning up the Sheboygan River from Lake Michigan upstream to Sheboygan Falls since the river was declared an Environmental Protection Agency Superfund site in the mid-1980s. The most recent work focused on removing the last sediment pollutants — mainly polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs — from the lower portion of the river.

The project also includes work to restore fish and wildlife habitat along the river at Kiwanis Park and around the intersection of Indiana Avenue and Taylor Drive. That portion of the work is mostly complete and over time is expected to bring healthier fish populations and a greater variety of birds and other wildlife to the area.

"I think it's going to be exciting to see how this stretch of river changes from a wildlife perspective," said Deb Beyer, a natural [resources](#) educator with the UW-Extension.

The dredging work will also deepen the channel to 16 feet in the inner harbor and to 10 feet upstream from the Eighth Street bridge. That will allow cruise ships and other deep-drafted boats to dock in the South Pier District and encourage economic development along the river.

City officials are currently working with the Sheboygan County Chamber of Commerce to market the river as a destination for Great Lakes boaters and cruise ships.

Pelishek said there's already been interest from developers in building new housing in the area with river access, along with additional dock space in the South Pier District.

"It will take some time, but there is definitely some increased interest in utilizing the river," Pelishek said.

— Reach Josh Lintereur at 920-453-5147.