APPLICATION OF GEOSPATIALLY ENABLED GEOGRAPHIC RESPONSE PLAN TO OIL SPILL RESPONSE IN THE WESTERN BASIN OF LAKE ERIE

The U-M Water Center engages researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and non-profit groups with the goal of supporting, integrating, and improving current and future restoration and protection efforts.

The grants program is an important part of the Water Center’s efforts to enhance restoration and protection activities by engaging exceptional multi-sector teams in advancing evaluation and assessment of restoration projects.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Project Summary

Oil spills can happen anywhere – even in the Great Lakes. Preventing future contamination of the Great Lakes is an important component of a healthy ecosystem and maintaining the benefits gained from recent Great Lakes restoration efforts.

The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 mandates the development of contingency plans for spill response. Contingency plans are designed to improve the speed and efficiency of a response during the critical first 48 hours after a spill, when quick action on the part of responders can keep a small spill from becoming much larger or limit the damage caused by the spill while a larger response is initiated.

Existing response maps and tables in the western Lake Erie Basin response plan are scans of paper documents or digital files published as pdf documents which are not readily modified and are of varying quality. Advancing technology allows the use of high resolution maps and information about the location of sensitive habitats to pre-plan a response to spills that might threaten that habitat.

The end result of this project will be standardized spill response plans and maps for critical habitat in the western basin of Lake Erie. The work will be accomplished in cooperation with the Western Lake Erie Area Committee, which is responsible for response planning, the U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit Toledo and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, all of which are key end users of the results of the work. The updated response plans will allow the analysis, display and distribution of information important to spill response in a manner that meets the different needs of the spill response community.

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