



Powderhorn Lake Habitat Restoration

The **Powderhorn Lake** habitat restoration project will improve habitat for fish and wildlife in northeast Illinois by reestablishing fish passage to Wolf Lake and Lake Michigan



Project location in southeast Chicago. Green line is the estimated Powderhorn Preserve Boundary. Yellow line is the estimated hydrologic reconnection route to Wolf Lake

Project Highlights

- Reestablish hydrologic connectivity with Wolf Lake to the north and ultimately Lake Michigan
- Reestablish emergent marsh habitat and shallow open water areas
- Install water level control structure to reduce flooding
- Conduct Pre and Post restoration monitoring
- Funding is provided by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)/ Great Lakes Commission (GLC) Regional Partnership
- Audubon Great Lakes is the local implementation partner

Environmental Benefits

Enhance fish and wildlife habitat
Improve hydrologic connectivity

Economic Benefits

Improve sport fishing
Improve tourism
Enhance recreation

Community Benefits

Improve fishing access
Control flooding
Improve birding

Powderhorn Lake Background

Powderhorn Lake is a 50-acre freshwater lake with an adjacent 55-acre shallow pool, owned by the Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC), and located in Chicago, Illinois. To the north lies Wolf Lake, a 950-acre freshwater lake that



Aerial photo of Powderhorn Lake (Photo provided by Audubon Great Lakes)

straddles Illinois and Indiana and is managed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Powderhorn Lake is embedded within one of the few remaining examples of the dune and swale topography that once characterized the Calumet Region along the south shore of Lake Michigan. Once connected as part of a large collection of marshes, lakes, and rivers adjacent to Lake Michigan, these lakes have been isolated by urban and industrial development.

Despite their isolation, populations of aquatic species characteristic of the Great Lakes basin persist. However, the impacts of isolation threaten their future survival. Currently, Powderhorn Lake remains separated from its northern neighbor, Wolf Lake, which connects to Lake Michigan through the Indian Creek pathway to the Calumet River. The Great Lakes Commission, along with Audubon Great Lakes, FPCC, and a local project management team are working to reconnect these lakes to allow for fish passage into and from the greater Lake Michigan ecosystem, and to reestablish emergent marsh habitat and open water areas managed with a water control structure within Powderhorn Lake.

Project Progress

The engineering and design for this project was completed in summer 2021. Project construction began in early 2022 and was completed in fall 2023. The project is being managed locally by Audubon Great Lakes. Additional monitoring efforts in cooperation with the Illinois Natural History Survey will take place during spring/ summer 2024.

Funding and Partners

Approximately \$1 million was available for this project through the GLRI, a regional program that is supporting implementation of a comprehensive restoration plan for the Great Lakes. The project funding comes from NOAA through a Regional Partnership with the Great Lakes Commission. The project is being managed locally by Audubon Great Lakes in collaboration with Forest Preserves of Cook County.

For More Information

Jill Estrada, Habitat Restoration Project Manager
Great Lakes Commission, 734-396-6059, jestrada@glc.org

Andy Hinickle, Senior Manager, Wetland Conservation
Audubon Great Lakes, Andrew.Hinickle@audubon.org

