

2020 Region 5 Highlights

January 2021

Here in EPA Region 5, we are dedicated to the knowledge that we don't have to choose between a healthy economy and a healthy environment — we can have both. I have made it my mission to do just that by offering our state, tribal and business partners, and the general public certainty in the way we fulfill our mission to protect the environment and safeguard human health.

I believe that certainty from regulators gives the American public the ability to do what they do best: innovate, create, and produce cleaner and safer technologies. Throughout fiscal year 2020, Region 5 worked hard to provide regulatory certainty to our stakeholders throughout the six states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Some of the highlights of this year's activities include:

- Awarded the first ever Great Lakes Trash-Free Waters grants, part of the more than \$68 million in Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grants awarded during fiscal year 2020.
- Readied 188 brownfields for reuse and deleted eight sites from the Superfund National Priorities List, helping communities foster economic development, while protecting public health.
- Redesignated nine non-attainment areas to attainment of National Ambient Air Quality Standards, resulting in 800,000 Region 5 residents breathing cleaner, safer air and a more efficient permitting process for area businesses.

Fiscal year 2020 was filled with many accomplishments for Region 5, even in the face of a global pandemic, and the advancements we made in protecting environmental and human health will provide additional opportunities for partnership, success and collaboration in the future. This report summarizes the accomplishments that best demonstrate the Region's commitment to achieving cleaner air, water, and land, while also providing certainty for our stakeholders and promoting economic revitalization.

Looking ahead to 2021 and beyond, the leadership and staff of Region 5 intend to build on the successes of this past year. Our efforts to form closer partnerships, streamline our processes, and to fulfill our commitment EPA's core mission will continue to benefit and serve the residents and economic prosperity of the Great Lakes region.



Kurt Thiede
Regional Administrator

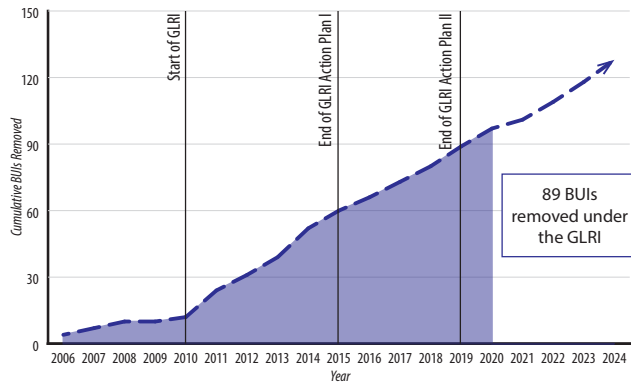
Great Lakes Restoration

The Great Lakes form the largest surface freshwater system on Earth. More than 30 million people live in the Great Lakes basin, and their daily activities, from the water consumed to the waste returned, directly affects the Great Lakes environment. EPA leads the United States' efforts to restore and maintain the quality and ecosystems of the Great Lakes watershed. During 2020, Region 5 expanded our efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes. This enhanced focus resulted in significant progress for these binational treasures and the communities surrounding them.

A highlight of the year that demonstrates success in restoring our Great Lakes is the official delisting of the Lower Menominee River Area of Concern, the fifth AOC to be delisted in our nation's history. We also made significant progress in other AOCs by removing nine beneficial use impairments. A BUI removal signifies a reversal in the environmental degradation that caused these areas to be designat-

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Great Lakes Protection and Restoration

In 2020, EPA removed nine beneficial use impairments at nine Areas of Concern in six states, bringing cumulative BUI removals since the start of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to 89. The BUI removals are important steps towards delisting these AOCs and promote community revitalization.



Trash-Free Waters

For the first time, EPA awarded seven grants totaling almost \$2.1 million that will be used to support community efforts to remove trash from Great Lakes beaches and waterbodies. Combatting freshwater and marine litter – and preventing trash from reaching our waterways in the first place – is one of EPA’s highest priorities.



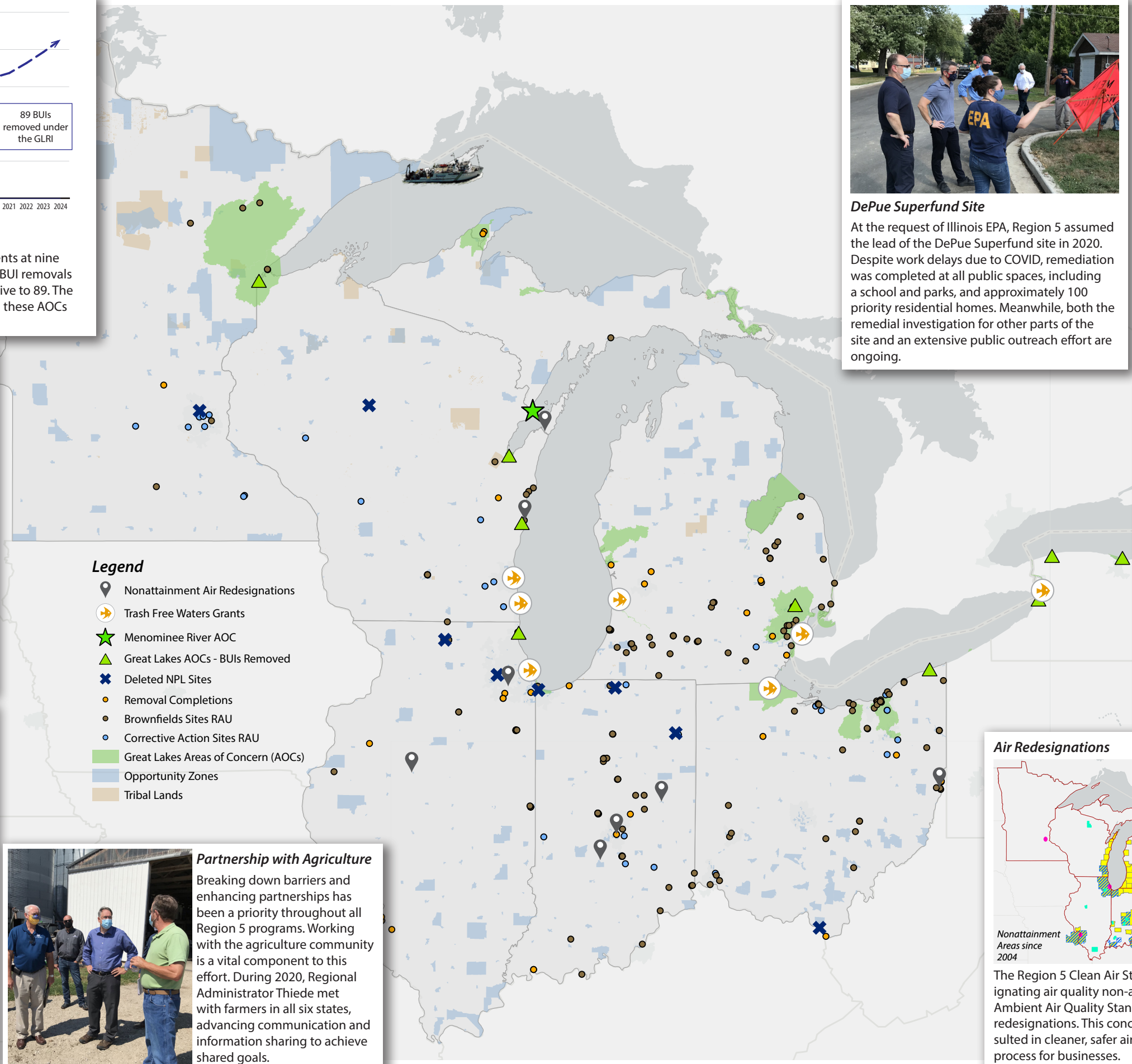
Lower Menominee River Delisting

In August, the Lower Menominee River AOC was formally delisted, making it the fifth U.S. AOC to be delisted. Contaminated river sediment and degraded habitat had impaired public benefits such as fish consumption, healthy fisheries, uncontaminated shipping channels, and wildlife habitat. More than \$170 million was invested in the restoration effort. GLRI provided \$28 million for habitat and sediment projects, leveraging \$15 million from non-federal sponsors.



Partnership with Agriculture

Breaking down barriers and enhancing partnerships has been a priority throughout all Region 5 programs. Working with the agriculture community is a vital component to this effort. During 2020, Regional Administrator Thiede met with farmers in all six states, advancing communication and information sharing to achieve shared goals.



DePue Superfund Site

At the request of Illinois EPA, Region 5 assumed the lead of the DePue Superfund site in 2020. Despite work delays due to COVID, remediation was completed at all public spaces, including a school and parks, and approximately 100 priority residential homes. Meanwhile, both the remedial investigation for other parts of the site and an extensive public outreach effort are ongoing.



Superfund Cleanups

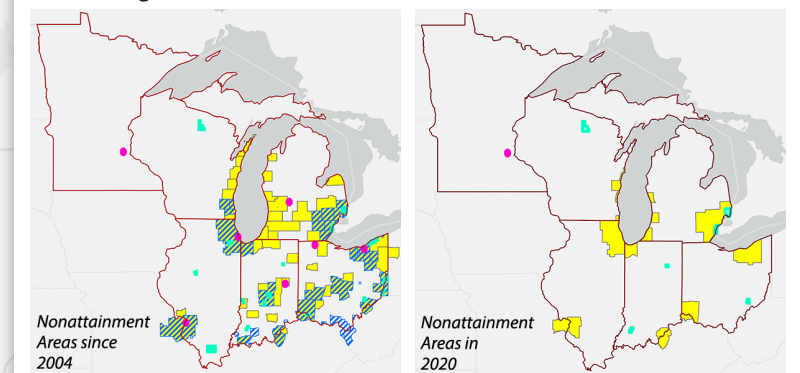
Over the last four fiscal years, EPA has fully or partially delisted 82 sites from the National Priorities List. In 2020, we deleted eight Region 5 sites from the NPL, representing one-third of the national total. We also completed 29 emergency removals to address immediate threats to public health, more than 71% of which were located in Environmental Justice areas. The Region deployed to 17 emergency responses, 14 involving hazardous materials, and three involving oil.



Land Reuse and Redevelopment

Region 5 led the nation in brownfields achievements, including preparing 188 properties to meet ready-for-anticipated use requirements, assessing 417 properties, and cleaning up 17 properties. The Region also invested \$9 million in Opportunity Zones through EPA’s Brownfields Program. This funding will spur economic and redevelopment opportunities in some of the most underserved communities in the region.

Air Redesignations



The Region 5 Clean Air Strategy has accelerated the region’s pace in redesignating air quality non-attainment areas to attainment of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. In 2020, the Region completed nine air redesignations. This concerted effort by EPA and our state partners has resulted in cleaner, safer air for area residents and a more efficient permitting process for businesses.

ed as an AOC and takes us one step closer to delisting. With this year's actions, cumulative BUI removals since the start of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in 2010 has now reached a total of 87.

Another major accomplishment for the Great Lakes National Program Office is EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler's Trash-Free Waters Program awarding seven grants totaling almost \$2.1 million. This innovative investment will support community efforts to remove trash from Great Lakes beaches and waterbodies.

Reducing nutrients throughout the Great Lakes Basin is a major priority for EPA and our partners. To make progress towards that goal, while also promoting innovative practices, Region 5 awarded nearly \$11 million in GLRI funding for 20 nutrient-reduction projects. This included the very first EPA competitive grant opportunity for innovative market-based projects under the GLRI program designed to accelerate nutrient reduction efforts in the Great Lakes basin.

Cleaner Air

Nowhere were we have EPA's accomplishments more impactful on human health than our contributions to cleaner air. Nationally, from 2017 to 2019, the combined emission of criteria pollutants and their precursors dropped 7%. In FY20 alone in Region 5 we completed nine air quality redesignations, more than a third of the nation's total. This Administration has prioritized these efforts with an understanding that a healthy environment is a precursor to a healthy economy. By implementing the Region 5 Clean Air Strategy, almost 800,000 Region 5 residents are now breathing cleaner air. With these improvements, local businesses in these communities will face a more straightforward permitting process that will pave the way for economic development and job creation.

Partnerships

Region 5 has a culture that values and encourages partnerships throughout every program. The success achieved throughout the Region would not have been possible without a foundation of strong coordination and communication with our state, local, and industry partners. By working with state and local agencies we were able to lead the nation in achieving cleanups and helping communities move forward, allowing land to be repurposed and reused in more productive ways. This year, our emphasis on this process resulted in exceeding all our EPA Brownfields program goals, including achieving 150% of our Ready for Anticipated Use goal, 160% of our properties assessed goal, and 121% of our properties cleaned up goal. Through these effective partnerships, the Region was able to successfully delete eight sites off the Superfund National Priorities List and complete work at the Fox River site in Green Bay, Wis., the largest Superfund sediment cleanup project.

An area of increased stakeholder partnership this past year was with the agricultural community. During 2020, Regional Administrator Kurt Thiede sat down in machine shops in every Region 5 state to hear directly from Farm Bureaus and farmers about challenges and successes. These opportunities resulted in better partnerships and a commitment to information sharing about conservation practices that allow farmers to both protect their environment and communities, while simultaneously operating their farms in a more efficient manner.

Although 2020 brought with it the COVID-19 pandemic and we faced numerous challenges because of it, it also provided an opportunity to come together and help our communities when they needed it most. In response to COVID, Region 5 collected, prepared, and transferred almost 10,000 surplus PPE items to partner response organizations. The Region 5 lab innovated methods to meet customer needs while adhering to COVID restrictions, achieving 100% on time delivery of sample analyses and exceeding 2020 targets.

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Thanks to EPA's effective partnership with the State of Ohio, Steubenville, Ohio meets the federal air quality standard for sulfur dioxide. The area has cleaner, healthier air which is home to more than 38,000 people.
[@OhioEPA](#)



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In Racine, Wisconsin, EPA's job-training grants give residents an opportunity to gain the skills and certifications needed to secure local environmental work. #Brownfields
[epa.gov/newsreleases/e...](#)
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(1 of 3) Thanks to years of hard work, Flint's water infrastructure has greatly improved. The important steps that [@Cityof_Flint](#) is taking will make it a model for other communities on how to safeguard residents from lead exposure. [epa.gov/newsreleases/e...](#)
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