

# Nearshore Aquatic and Terrestrial Ecological Assessment of Whiskey Island

Cleveland, Ohio



Whiskey Island sits on the western edge of downtown Cleveland, where the Cuyahoga River enters Lake Erie. Since it was first settled, Whiskey Island has been modified for human uses that are identifiable on the landscape today. From the mid-1800s through the latter part of the 20th century, the island contained a foundry

and was used as a transfer point for iron ore, coal, salt and limestone between the Great Lakes and railroads leading inland. In the 1940s, a U.S. Coast Guard station was constructed at the eastern edge of the island, which operated until 1970 and is still in place today. A marina was constructed on the island in 1993.

*An ecological assessment informs the master plan for Wendy Park, helping to protect and enhance Cleveland's only public park with direct access to Lake Erie and the Cuyahoga River.*

After purchasing a portion of Whiskey Island in 2004, Cuyahoga County removed industrial debris, cleared a portion of the beach, established trails, and officially opened Wendy Park. Spanning 22 acres, it is the only public park in Cuyahoga County that provides direct access to Lake Erie and the Cuyahoga River.

Since its opening, Wendy Park has become increasingly popular. A management plan was initiated to help maintain the park's natural character and preserve the visitor's recreational experience. Biohabitats led an ecological inventory and assessment to support the development of the management plan.

Biohabitats' assessment included a literature and data review of ecological resources,

a terrestrial assessment of vegetation and wildlife, and an assessment of nearshore aquatic habitats which included aquatic vegetation and morphology. The information helped guide the master plan planning process by identifying opportunities to regenerate natural areas, and suggesting innovative ways to manage rainwater and runoff, create and manage functional landscapes, and help facilitate and manage public access. These elements, which were incorporated into the management plan (published in July 2012), will help more people enjoy Cleveland's Lake Erie waterfront.

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