

Where is the west shore coastal zone?

Wisconsin's Green Bay west shore coastal zone stretches from the Fox River in the City of Green Bay to the Menominee River in the City of Marinette. The width of the coastal zone varies based on hydrology and topography. Because of the area's low and gently sloping topography, much of the lands adjacent to the bay are wetlands. The west shore has over 50% of Wisconsin's Lake Michigan coastal wetlands, and 14% of Lake Michigan's total coastal wetlands.

What are wetlands?

Wetlands are areas where the water table is at or near the ground surface for at least part of the year; the soils indicate exposure to water ("hydric" soils); and water-tolerant or water-loving plant species are present. Some wetlands are ephemeral, which means that water is present only during certain times (usually in spring).

Wetlands need healthy watersheds

Coastal wetlands are fed by waters that flow into Green Bay from all across the watershed. How we care for the land in our watersheds can affect the health of our wetlands. Runoff from urban and agricultural land picks up soil, nutrients and other pollutants that harm our wetlands. Also, as land is developed, less water soaks into the ground and the quantity of groundwater recharging the wetland is reduced. Changes to the quality and quantity of water flowing into wetlands can impair their ability to support native plant and animal species and facilitate invasion by non-native species. To learn more about what you can do to protect wetlands, contact the Wisconsin Wetlands Association at (608) 250-9971 or visit their web site at: www.wiscwetlands.org

To learn about west shore ecology and educational opportunities, contact:

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Great Lakes coastal wetlands web links:

Coastal Wetlands of Wisconsin's Great Lakes:
A Data Compilation and Assessment
www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/er/publications/cw/

Between Sky and Shore:
Wisconsin's Coastal Wetlands
www.wnrmag.com/supps/1996/apr96.htm

The Upper Green Bay Basin
<http://basineducation.uwex.edu/uppergb/>

For information about west shore recreational facilities, contact:

Marinette County:
www.marinettecounty.com or 715-732-7784

Oconto County:
www.ocontocounty.org or 888-626-6862

Brown County Parks:
www.co.brown.wi.us/Parks or 920-448-4466

Green Bay's West Shore Coastal Wetlands

Jewels in the Lake Michigan Basin



Green Bay's West Shore . . .

Provides habitat for plants and animals

The west shore provides excellent nesting, feeding, resting, and breeding habitat for many different bird species, including the state-endangered Forster's tern and common tern.

This area is also important for sustaining fish populations. According to the Great Lakes National Program Office, at least 32 of 36 species of Great Lakes fish studied depend on coastal wetlands for reproduction. Northern Pike are particularly dependent on these wetlands because they swim inland to spawn in marshes that are connected to Green Bay via a network of small streams and ditches.

West shore ephemeral wetlands provide habitat for turtles, frogs, toads and other amphibians and aquatic invertebrates that spend part of their life cycle in water and part in the upland areas.

Provides recreational opportunities

The west shore coastal zone supports a wide range of recreational opportunities, including fishing, bird watching, duck hunting, deer hunting, and canoeing. The importance of these opportunities is emphasized by a 2001 U.S. Fish and Wildlife survey which showed that 53% of all Wisconsin residents age 16 and over participate in wildlife watching, the third highest in the U.S.

Protects water quality

Wetlands trap sediments, absorb and cycle nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen, and protect the shoreline from erosion. These valuable wetland functions protect water quality and are important for sustaining healthy ecosystems both on land and in the bay.

. . . **A World Class Ecosystem**

