



# COUNTY OF KENOSHA

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News Release

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## **Kenosha County receives Fund for Lake Michigan grant for Pike River restoration work**

A \$75,000 grant from the Fund for Lake Michigan will go toward restoration work on the South Branch of the Pike River, Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser announced today.

These funds – the latest in a series of grants aimed at improving the Pike – will be used to complete Phase 1 environmental site assessment work and groundwater sampling, and will cover the local match for a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers stream survey.

The goals of the South Branch restoration project are to improve aquatic and pollinator habitat, enhance water quality and reduce risks to other restoration investments being made downstream on the Main Branch of the Pike River in and around Petrifying Springs Park.

“We know that the quality of the Pike River watershed is important to the environmental health of our county and, ultimately, to our region’s most significant environmental feature, Lake Michigan,” Kreuser said. “I am grateful to the Fund for Lake Michigan for its continued support of our efforts.”

Vicki Elkin, executive director of the Fund for Lake Michigan, said the organization is proud to continue its partnership with Kenosha County to improve the health of the Pike River and Lake Michigan.

“Our current grant to the county builds on impressive investments over the past several years to restore significant stretches of the Pike River and will help ensure that these restoration efforts continue well into the future,” Elkin said. “We applaud Kenosha County’s leadership in pursuing this important work.”

The South Branch of the Pike River is a drainageway that runs through the City of Kenosha and the Village of Somers, originating near Highway 50 just west of 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue. It flows northward alongside the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and to Petrifying Springs Park, where it meets the

North Branch of the Pike and combines to form the Main Pike River, which then flows east and south to Lake Michigan.

The South Branch was identified as a priority area in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved Nine-Element Pike River Watershed Plan. This portion of the river system has been severely degraded by agricultural ditching, which channelized the river around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, facilitating flashy flow conditions, increased erosion and sediment loading during rain events. These conditions have led to changes in the flow and character of the river, resulting in issues with flooding, sediment control and negative impacts on fish and wildlife.

South Branch restoration activities will include channel widening, bank stabilization and in-stream habitat improvements to replace the channelized linear streambed that was left from farm-dredging operations of the past. Other efforts will include native plantings to restore natural prairie and wetlands in the surrounding area. It is anticipated the restoration will result in a greater migration of fish.

Design work is scheduled to begin this year, continuing into 2021. One of Kenosha County's project partners, the Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network, has already received a \$100,000 Army Corps of Engineers planning grant to begin preliminary research and planning on the South Branch.

Restoration work on the Main Branch of the Pike in Petrifying Springs Park remains ongoing. This project is being supported by a \$500,000 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant from the EPA, as well as a \$200,000 award and other support from the Fund for Lake Michigan.

“We will continue to work with our partners to obtain funding for these important river improvements, with minimal impact to our local taxpayers,” Kreuser said. “It improves our environment, and, ultimately, our quality of life.”

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