

Sustainable wetlands a solid industrial solution

In Sarmia, Ontario, CH2M HILL helped global manufacturer ICI take a former pretreatment pond and convert it to a lush wetland and wildlife sanctuary, setting a high standard for decommissioning and restoration of former industrial sites.

The 13-hectare site (32 acres), complete with public viewing areas, includes several features, all named after indigenous wildlife, such as Moorhen Marsh and Kestrel, Osprey and Coyote islands. Nesting boxes and platforms, open water areas, densely vegetated marshes, raptor perches and turtle basking logs were provided to attract wildlife.

"I was impressed with the number and variety of birds on the site for such a new wetland," said Rick Batson, St. Clair Region Conservation Authority, during the commissioning of the site last August. "One of

the most exciting aspects of this project was the provision of public access, including the viewing platforms."

Since ICI ended its fertilizer production operations, the site has gone through extensive restoration. Following the expansion of the wetland to four times its original size (this was done to promote higher quality water), cattails, trees, shrubs, flowers and other vegetation were planted. The lush vegetation and water provide ideal habitat for breeding and migratory birds, as well as for other fauna.

Three viewing platforms are located along the top of the dyke. Signage provides history of the site and wildlife information. A logbook is onsite to record wildlife sightings.

"This initiative considers the wildlife benefits that can be derived from lands that might otherwise provide poorer habitat and no opportunity for public access," said CH2M HILL's John Pries. "We have been a proud team player in this project and look forward to seeing this site grow and mature over the years."

In addition to Pries, Jon Shaw, Mike Orban and Jim Bays were involved in the project's design. 

At an event marking the completion of the project in Sarmia, Ontario, ICI officials, local dignitaries and CH2M HILL employees celebrated the sites transition from a pretreatment pond to a wetlands and wildlife sanctuary, Jack Riddell (top) of the Ontario Great Lakes Renewable foundation presents an award to ICI's Jon Shaw. ICI has been recognized as raising the bar for industrial site restoration. Now that it's completed, the site is attracting waterfowl as well as local residents. Strategically placed viewing stations have been provided for visitors to spot Kestrels, Osprey, Moorhen and a host of other indigenous wildlife.

For more information on the project, contact John.Pries@ch2m.com

