

# Krispin Drain Habitat Restoration

By Barb Crown



Krispin Drain - School house off to left.



Krispin Drain - Now after dredging.

The St. Clair delta is very special. It is the largest delta in the Great Lakes system and is unusual because it changes quickly in response to lake conditions creating special landforms, like wide channels, and distinctive vegetation. Harsen's Island is a delta formed by the St. Clair River, which flows south from Lake Huron to Lake St. Clair. Because it is unique the St. Clair delta system is home to a great diversity of fish and wildlife. Over the past century, however, critical habitat has been altered due to shipping channel construction, and agricultural, residential and commercial development.

The goal of this habitat restoration is to enhance habitat within the St. Clair delta while providing opportunities to engage and enjoy its unique environment. Krispin Drain is an artificial waterway that traverses the center of Harsen's Island, which is part of the St. Clair River Great Lakes Area of Concern. Krispin Drain was improved by increasing water flow, and placing cobble on the bottom for

fish habitat. Invasive Phragmites were removed to encourage regrowth of wetlands plants from the existing native seed bank. Native trees and shrubs were also planted.

As reported by the January/February 2016 issue of *International Dredging Review*, "the project to restore the lost habitat involved removing 26,000 cubic yards of material from the three upper miles of the Drain. The remaining lower stretch, which runs through the wildlife refuge and waterfowl hunting area, is managed by Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The Drain eventually empties into Little Muscamoot Bay in Lake St. Clair. General Contractor GLSR is a joint venture including J.F. Brennan Company, Environmental Restoration, LLC and Natural Resource Technologies. Brennan performed the dredging and other waterside operations, while Environmental Restoration handled the upland operation." Many Islanders watched in awe as the big excavators dredged and moved through the Drain. It was a fascinating show.

Photos by George Crown



Krispin Drain Restoration.



Working in the Muck.



Dredging equipment.



Aerial view of project.

Improvements to the Drain are expected to attract and provide better habitat for amphibians such as our state's threatened Blanchard's cricket frog, spotted turtle and western fox snake. In addition, increased water flow and bottom enhancements will provide better spawning and nursery areas for many fish species. Fruit bearing native trees and shrubs will attract birds and other wildlife.

Artie Bryson, Clay Township Supervisor, said the Krispin Drain was originally excavated in the 1940's and named for Dan Krispin, who did the original dredging. With its restored flow and wildlife habitat, the Krispin Drain will be designated as part of the "Blueways of St. Clair" National Water Trail for kayakers.

As reported in the January/February 2016 issue of *International Dredging Review*, "with the completion of the project, a two year monitoring period begins, to ensure that the goals of the project – the absence of Phragmites, continued water flow and viable wildlife habitat will continue to be met." ■



Dredger & Dump Truck.



Dredger moving into the drain.