



RESTORING THE DOWAGIAC RIVER ON TRIBAL LANDS

The word *Dowagiac* comes from the Potawatomi language and means
a place to hunt, fish, and forage.

The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians has lived in the vicinity of the Dowagiac River for hundreds of years because of the abundant natural resources. The Dowagiac, a coldwater river, had supported an active fishery on which many Pokagon citizens depended for food until it was dammed, dredged, and straightened in the early 1900's, resulting in a degraded riverine system and loss of wetlands.

Since 2011, the Pokagon Band has been working to restore a stretch of the Dowagiac River where it runs through tribal land by returning its flow to the historic meander bends. The removal of the Pucker Street Dam downstream of the project has opened 159 miles of the Dowagiac River and its tributaries to migrating fish species, including those from Lake Michigan, allowing Pokagon citizens to fish for these traditional food sources for the first time in almost a century. The re-meandered stretch of the River will provide enhanced habitats for these fish and many other river and wetland species.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS THUS FAR

- Feasibility study
- A meandering configuration with no negative impact on neighboring lands during a 100-year storm event
- Wetland delineation
- Tribal Historic Preservation Office review
- Environmental assessment
- All necessary permitting and agreements
- Engineered drawings for project construction



ECOLOGICAL BENEFITS

- Enhanced habitats for plant and animal species of cultural significance to the Pokagon Band
- More habitat niches for slow and fast-flowing water species
- Niche habitats for migratory fish and needed spawning, feeding, and fry habitat
- Additional flood storage
- New wetland habitats
- Hydrology restored to over 55 acres of wetlands in the floodplain
- Reduced sedimentation in the River
- More resilience to climate change
- Progress toward the goals of multiple local, state, and regional conservation initiatives

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