



June 13, 2005

DTE Energy Foundation grant to help build gateway to Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

TRENTON, Mich. – The Friends of Wayne County Parks today announced it has received a \$100,000 grant from the DTE Energy Foundation to help develop a gateway center to the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. When completed, the gateway and adjacent Humbug Marsh will provide exceptional environmental education and recreational opportunities for the thousands of visitors it is expected to draw each year.

The site will include a visitor center, wildlife viewing stations, natural prairie gardens and will be the starting point for hiking trails through the area. It also will include a classroom and laboratory for Wayne County Community College as well as administrative offices for Wayne County Parks, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and other organizations.

“The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge is a groundbreaking project that will benefit Wayne County for years to come. It is only with private support from organizations like the DTE Energy Foundation allocating the much-needed grant funding and Wayne County working together to facilitate the project that our residents can boast that they live near the first international refuge in North America,” said Robert Ficano, Wayne County Executive. “There will always be a protected and conserved area in Wayne County that our children may visit, experience and learn from.”

The DTE Energy Foundation grant will be used to commission detailed architectural and engineering design work for the visitor center and offices. It will be a “green” facility, employing construction and building practices that are efficient, functional and environmentally sound.

“The DTE Energy Foundation is very pleased to play a part in transforming this parcel of land from an industrial site to a picturesque location that offers the residents of southeastern Michigan a source for environmental education and outdoor recreation,” said Paul Hillegonds, DTE Energy senior vice president of corporate affairs. “We believe the partnership between governmental and private organizations will be a foundation of strength and stability for the park.”

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge is located along the lower Detroit River and western shoreline of Lake Erie. Established in 2001, it was the first International Wildlife Refuge in North America. Islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals and waterfront lands all can be found within its boundaries. U.S. Rep. John Dingell [D-Dearborn] was instrumental in creating the Refuge.

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"With this grant DTE Energy once again demonstrates its commitment to the people of southeast Michigan and to responsible environmental stewardship," Dingell said. "This generous grant lays the foundation upon which a permanent community gateway into the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge will rise. I look forward to continue working with DTE Energy to expand and improve the refuge for all to access and enjoy."

The Friends of Wayne County Parks was established in 1990 as a 501(c)3, public, non-profit organization. Its mission is to encourage citizen support and participation in the funding and implementation of programs that will preserve, promote and enhance the unique park resources within the Wayne County Park System.

The DTE Energy Foundation continues the legacy of community involvement and support from the former Detroit Edison Foundation and MichCon Foundation following the merger of DTE Energy and MCN Energy. The DTE Energy Foundation directs its contributions and involvement to support initiatives dedicated to the developing human and economic potential of the communities it serves. Grants are awarded under the foundation's "LEAD" guidelines: leadership, education, environment, achievement, development and diversity in DTE Energy service territory, which includes southeast, western and northern Michigan.

A detailed map and additional information about the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge are available at www.fws.gov/midwest/detroitriver/.

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