

M I C H I G A N

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Levin Amendments Would Protect and Restore Detroit Riverfront Land

Defense bill provisions would improve public access to riverfront and expand wildlife refuge on Grosse Ile

WASHINGTON – Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., announced that the National Defense Authorization Act, which the Senate approved by a vote of 92-3 late yesterday, includes a provision to assist efforts in the City of Detroit to advance a waterfront walk along the Detroit River and another provision to clean up a former missile site on Grosse Ile so that it can be incorporated into the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Both amendments were approved by the Senate by unanimous consent.

“The Detroit River has always been home to rich, diverse fish and wildlife, but pollution and development have taken their toll on the waterfront,” Levin said. “This is a river we need to protect. We’re always looking for ways to conserve the land, both for ecological preservation and also to improve public access to the water. These two provisions will help with those efforts.”

Grosse Ile Land Transfer:

This Levin amendment would transfer a former missile site on the southern tip of Grosse Ile from the EPA to the Department of the Interior for inclusion in the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. The provision also requires the Department of Defense to carry out environmental cleanup activities at the property. The land being transferred sits in what is known locally as the "conservation crescent" of the Detroit River and holds great potential for restoration of fish and wildlife habitat. Congressman John Dingell, D-Dearborn, has authored a similar provision in the House of Representatives.

The property covered by this amendment was a NIKE Missile site from 1955-1963. In 1955, the US Army installed a NIKE AJAX guided missile base and underground missile silos on Gross Ile to guard against the threat of Soviet long range bombers crossing the Arctic and Canada. In 1963, the NIKE AJAX base was declared obsolete and decommissioned. In 1970, the property was transferred from the control of the Department of Defense (DoD) to the EPA. In the early 1990's, the DoD demolished most of the structures on the property. The land being transferred currently has about 6 8 acres with concentrations of arsenic and lead that exceed ecological risk thresholds.

In August 2007, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service completed a survey of the property and determined that remediation was required before the land could be usable for fish and wildlife habitat. The Department of Defense, through the Army Corps of Engineers, continues to have primary responsibility for clean up and remediation of the property.

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge is one of 540 refuges managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is approximately 48 miles long and is located along the Detroit River and the western shore of Lake Erie from the City of Detroit to the Michigan/Ohio border. It was established by a 2001 bill sponsored by Congressman John Dingell in the House of Representatives and Sens. Levin and Debbie Stabenow in the Senate.

Detroit Riverfront Land Transfer:

This provision, authored by Senator Levin, would authorize a land exchange between the City of Detroit and the U.S. Coast Guard along the Detroit River waterfront. The land exchange will allow the Coast Guard to enhance their operations and facilities and enable the City of Detroit to connect two segments of the riverfront walk.

The waterfront property currently owned by the Coast Guard – 1.26 acres located at 2660 Atwater Street – will be incorporated into the city's riverfront revitalization project. Once the city acquires the property from the Coast Guard, it will be turned over to the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy for a 99-year lease. The city's .74-acre parcel, located at 119 Mount Elliott Street approximately a mile away from the Coast Guard property, is a vacant lot behind the current Coast Guard station. The Coast Guard plans to use the land for a parking lot and to expand their boat maintenance facility.

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy seeks to establish a five-mile walkway along the Detroit Riverfront, spanning from the Ambassador Bridge to beyond the MacArthur Bridge

at Belle Isle. For over 30 years, Levin has been deeply involved in the effort and has helped to secure funding, facilitate and negotiate agreements, and assist with planning. More information on the effort can be found [here](#).

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