

# NEWS RELEASE



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## 35 Acres in Berlin Township Added to Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

Monroe, Michigan – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (The Service), Monroe County, The Trust for Public Land, and Ducks Unlimited, Inc. announce the acquisition and permanent protection of 35 acres of Berlin Township lands for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. This new acquisition is located in Estral Beach adjacent to the Refuge’s Strong Unit. The Burke property is made up of uplands and seasonal wetlands, and portions have been farmed for the last thirty years.

The Service is interested in working with partners to restore the agricultural portions of this property to native prairie and grassland habitats that will enhance the ecological buffer for the coastal wetlands on the adjacent 168-acre Strong Unit. The Burke property is well known in Monroe County for its use by wildlife, including waterfowl, great blue heron, egret, raptors, and the threatened eastern fox snake.

The Burke property was purchased with federal funding from a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant that was awarded to Ducks Unlimited in 2008. The Trust for Public Land played a key role in the real estate transaction, working closely with The Service’s Division of Realty. Ducks Unlimited also played a critical role by writing and administering the NAWCA grant and securing federal funding that helped with the acquisition. Monroe County played a critical role by donating the Plum Creek Bay Unit to the Refuge in 2008, and contributing the fair market value of the property as necessary match for the NAWCA grant.

“This could not and would not have happened but for the foresight and commitment of the Monroe County Board of Commissioners,” said Congressman Dingell. “I once again want to thank Chairman Sisk, Vice Chairman Dale Zorn and Commissioners Henry Lievens, Al Potratz, Floreine Mentel, Jerry Oley, John Fowler, Connie Velliquette and LaMar Frederick for the great deed of donating Plum Creek Bay to the Refuge that made it possible for us to use its value as match on a NAWCA grant that has now allowed us to purchase the Bruke property. Of course, this acquisition would not have been possible without the efforts of our good friends at The Trust for Public Land and Ducks Unlimited who helped secure the land and funding for the benefit of wildlife and future generations of Monroe County citizens.”

“We in Monroe County are so proud to be the home of North America’s only International Wildlife Refuge and to be part of a nationally-recognized public-private partnership that protects wildlife, enhances close-to-home outdoor recreation, and improves quality of life for present and future generations,” notes Chairman Bill Sisk of the Monroe County Commission.

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge incorporates more than 5,700 acres along a 48-mile stretch of shoreline on the lower Detroit River and western Lake Erie (<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/detroitriver/>). The Refuge focuses on conserving, protecting, and restoring habitat for 29 species of waterfowl, 23 species of raptors, 31 species of shorebirds, over 100 species of fish, and a total of over 300 species of birds. The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge is the first international refuge in North America and one of only a few urban ones in the nation. Unique habitats being managed within the Refuge include islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals and waterfront lands.

For more information, contact Steve Dushane, Assistant Refuge Manager at (734) 692-7604, Tom Evers of The Trust for Public Land at (651) 999-5322, or Kristin Schrader of Ducks Unlimited at (734) 623-2000.

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