



## **NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

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### **Binational Cooperation Produces Detroit River and Western Lake Erie “Ecological Benefits of Habitat Modification” Report**

*Windsor/Detroit* – Over the last 30 years, significant progress has been made to restore lost and degraded habitats, especially in the Detroit River and western Lake Erie basin. However, scientists have recently identified knowledge and communication gaps relating to habitat modification projects in this region. Prior to the binational, biennial *State of the Strait* Conference on April 28, 2009, limited efforts had been undertaken to measure ecological improvements and cumulative effects of habitat restoration initiatives, and to quantify progress relative to goals and targets of existing plans or programs. As a result of the conference, the binational partnership has produced a report summarizing the recommendations from twelve habitat modification case studies discussed at the April 28<sup>th</sup> conference.

“The State of the Strait Conference is an important tool of the United States and Canada to achieve cooperative learning about the health of our Detroit River and western Lake Erie. By maintaining the highest standards of scientific research, this Conference is yet another example of the quality of wildlife management that is made possible by the truly international character of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.” noted Congressman John D. Dingell. “We must continue to place a high priority on measuring the effectiveness of our conservation and restoration activities so that future generations benefit from the lessons learned from our current efforts.”

“This type of binational cooperation and information sharing is imperative to the restoration of our shared Great Lakes,” said Canadian Member of Parliament Jeff Watson. “Where we have ongoing monitoring and active research programs, river restoration is often accelerated and more effective.”

The Report recommends that habitat modification initiatives become more strongly coupled with scientific method through quantitative assessments and long-term monitoring. Moreover, the Report proposes having regular information sessions to share ideas and knowledge relating to the science and technology of habitat restoration. It is also recommended that greater effort be expended on citizen and student involvement in habitat modification and monitoring ecological effectiveness.

Examples of habitat modification/restoration projects discussed in the report include soft shoreline engineering (i.e., using ecological principles to reduce erosion and improve fish and wildlife habitat), wetland mitigation, *Phragmites* (an invasive plant species) control, and fish and wildlife habitat enhancements.

The *State of the Strait* is a bi-national collaboration that hosts a conference every two years to bring together government managers, researchers, students, environmental and conservation

organizations, and concerned citizens. Conference participants work to understand historical ecosystem conditions and assess current ecosystem status in order to achieve a better future for the Detroit River and western Lake Erie. Previous *State of the Strait* Conferences have explored the status of key environmental indicators for the Detroit River and western Lake Erie, monitoring for sound management, and strengthening science-management linkages.

A complete copy of the *State of the Strait: Ecological Benefits of Habitat Modification* is available online at [www.stateofthestrain.org](http://www.stateofthestrain.org)

Key sponsors of the 2009 *State of the Strait Conference* and the 2010 report include: Canadian Consulate; CDM; City of Windsor; Detroit River Canadian Cleanup; DTE Energy; Environment Canada; Essex Region Conservation Authority; Friends of the Detroit River; International Joint Commission; International Wildlife Refuge Alliance; Metropolitan Affairs Coalition; Michigan Sea Grant; Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources; University of Michigan-Dearborn; University of Windsor; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Geological Survey; and Windsor Port Authority.

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