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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Donates Fishing Poles to Help Teach Detroit Youth the Joys of Fishing Along the Detroit Riverfront

DETROIT, MICHIGAN – A donation from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of nearly 300 fishing poles will allow the Detroit RiverFront Conservancy and its partners to accommodate even more children during the popular Kids Fishing Fest, which is held each June along the Detroit River. The free youth fishing and conservation event was launched by the Conservancy, Rivertown Detroit Association, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in 2011.

This year's event will be held Sunday, June 12 at Milliken State Park in downtown Detroit.

Kids Fishing Fest is designed to engage children ages 6 to 14 in the sport of fishing along the Detroit River and to educate them on the principles of water stewardship while creating lasting memories and strengthening ties to their families, communities and the environment.

Last year, more than 400 children and their families were treated to a day of free fishing and family fun, including seminars, games, entertainment, arts and crafts, prizes and a raffle. Additionally, troopers from the Michigan State Police and officers from the Michigan DNR and Detroit Police Department were in attendance to interact with participants and to help children with fishing activities.

The fishing poles donation was made in support of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services' new Urban Wildlife Refuge Program, which was created to ensure that a growing urban population across the country values natural resources and that a priority is placed on developing the next generation of conservationists in urban areas.

The Detroit River is well known for its exceptional fishery, with 113 species identified by biologists. An estimated 10 million walleye ascend the Detroit River from Lake Erie each spring to spawn, creating an internationally renowned sport fishery. The Detroit River wetlands also provide spawning areas for 26 percent of the fish species in the entire Great Lakes.

Kids Fishing Fest organizers are pleased with the generous donation and are excited about this year's event.

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Kids Fishing Fest 2-2-2

"The coolest part of this event is watching little kids catch their first fish," said Mark Wallace, president and CEO of the Detroit RiverFront Conservancy. "Fishing is a great family activity, and the Kids Fishing Fest allows families from Detroit and all over to make great memories together. We are very happy to see this program expanded with the generous donation from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service."

"These fishing poles will make an enormous impact through our annual Kids Fishing Fest," said Chip Rohde, president of Rivertown Detroit Association. "For me, Kids Fishing Fest is a dream come true to be able to bring kids down to the riverfront and teach them to fish."

"National surveys have shown that there are more than 33 million anglers in the United States, and our Detroit River has an international reputation for its fishery," notes Dr. John Hartig, Refuge Manager of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. "The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proud to be a partner in an event that helps reconnect people with nature, brings families together and brings smiles to children's faces."

About The Detroit RiverFront Conservancy

The Detroit RiverFront Conservancy is a non-profit organization founded in 2003 with the mission to develop public access to Detroit's riverfront and to serve as an anchor for economic development. As the permanent stewards of the RiverWalk and the Dequindre Cut, the Conservancy is responsible for raising the funds needed for construction, operation, maintenance, security and programming of the public spaces located along the riverfront. The Conservancy's ultimate vision is to develop five-and-a-half miles of riverfront from the Ambassador Bridge on the west to Gabriel Richard Park, just east of the MacArthur Bridge to Belle Isle. Visit www.detroitriverfront.org for more information.

About Rivertown Detroit

Rivertown Detroit Association is a 501(c)(3) non-profit all volunteer organization focused on improving living and working in Rivertown Detroit, fondly known as the "Sliver on the River" (www.rivertowndetroit.org). The efforts of our 2000 members are coordinated with the Detroit RiverFront Conservancy, Downtown Detroit Partnership & Invest Detroit to help make a difference along the Detroit River between the Belle Isle (MacArthur) bridge and Renaissance Center. Monthly meetings are held with residents and business owners to network and help make a difference in this area. One of our most successful projects is the Kid's Fishing Fest--a great event for all. For more information about the Rivertown Detroit Association contact Chip Rohde at [313-259-1010](tel:313-259-1010) or chip@rivertowndetroit.org. Membership is free and open to all Rivertown residents, businesses and all others who have a special passion for Rivertown Detroit.

About the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is, working with others, to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service is both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation. Visit www.fws.gov to learn more.

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Sharing the joy of fishing with children from throughout the community at Kids Fishing Fest along the Detroit Riverfront. (photo credit: Detroit RiverFront Conservancy)