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## **DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE ALLIANCE BENEFIT DINNER SET FOR JUNE 27**

*Lake Erie Metropark will be the backdrop as Congressman John Dingell receives inaugural award  
Reservations now available for annual dinner*

(GROSSE ILE – June 8, 2009) - More than 300 people are expected to attend the 4th annual benefit dinner for the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance on Friday, June 27 at the Lake Erie Metropark in Brownstown Township – one of the management units of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

As part of the upscale outdoor “Summer BBQ in the Refuge,” **Congressman John D. Dingell** (D-Michigan) will receive the inaugural “Friend of the Refuge” award for 2009. In addition, a non-profit organization and a private sector organization will also be recognized for their support of the International Wildlife Refuge.

“Congressman Dingell’s efforts in establishing our International Wildlife Refuge have been tireless,” said **John Hartig**, Refuge Manager, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. “The refuge has expanded immensely due to his diligence, and we can’t think of a better individual to receive this inaugural ‘Friend of the Refuge’ award,” he continued.

Dingell and the late Peter Stroh were instrumental in working with U.S. and Canadian conservationists to make recommendations for furthering collaboration in preserving the unique ecological corridor that became the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Originally 300 acres, the Refuge has grown to more than 5,600 acres in eight years.

This year marks the first time that the annual dinner will be held outdoors and within the refuge. “We are excited to be celebrating the Refuge by hosting our annual dinner within its boundaries this year,” said **Dick Micka**, Chairman of the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance. “Attendees will be surrounded by the very nature they helped preserve through their support of the International Wildlife Refuge,” he continued.

The dinner will also recognize many accomplishments within the refuge in 2008. They include, in part: the completion of an environmental education shelter, rustic trails, handicap-accessible trails, a wetland boardwalk, and a pedestrian stream crossing, all in Humbug Marsh unit. In addition, Plum Creek Bay Unit in Monroe County was added to the Refuge, and public outreach programs were increased with a full-time Park Ranger and part-time ornithologist.

Organizations who have pledged support as major sponsors include: BASF Corporation, DTE Energy, ITC Holdings, Consumers Energy Foundation, and CN Railroad. Sponsorship opportunities are available by contacting the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance offices.

The dinner, including dancing and live music by The Monroe Big Band, will run from 5:30 pm to 10 pm with a special VIP reception at 5:30 pm. Reservations for the annual dinner are \$50 each or two for \$90. Reservations for the VIP reception are \$100. They can be reserved by calling (734) 692-7671. To join the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance or to learn more about the group, log on to [www.iwralliance.org](http://www.iwralliance.org).

(more)

*The **Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR)** was established in 2001, as the only international wildlife refuge in North America. The DRIWR is a shining example of the resurgence of native species within an urban region. The Refuge includes 48 miles of Detroit River and western Lake Erie shoreline, stretching from southwest Detroit to Erie Marsh, north of Toledo, and now encompasses more than 5,600 acres. Its unique location in a large urban area allows significant opportunities for the public to experience fish, wildlife, waterfowl and, plants in their natural habitat.*

*The mission of the **International Wildlife Refuge Alliance** is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization to support the first international wildlife refuge in North America by working through partnerships to protect, conserve, and manage the Refuge's wildlife and habitats; and to create exceptional conservation, recreational, and educational experiences to develop the next generation of conservation stewards. The group works to support the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in the development of the DRIWR.*

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