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HISTORIC COOPERATIVE CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS SIGNED FOR DETROIT RIVER-WESTERN LAKE ERIE

ERIE, MICHIGAN — History was made today as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) stating that 13,684 acres of state and federal lands will be managed cooperatively in spirit and intent of the 2001 Conservation Vision and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

The Michigan DNR and USFWS have a long history of monitoring and managing this corridor cooperatively. Through this MOU, Michigan DNR and USFWS pledge to work to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiencies relative to research, monitoring, conservation planning, restoration, and public use opportunities.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius stated that “Collaborating on conservation work like this is not only smart, it is a model for other major urban areas and an opportunity to meet our missions together. I look forward to seeing this partnership grow.”

Michigan DNR Director Keith Creagh stated that “Fish and wildlife know no boundaries. This historic agreement will help Michigan DNR and USFWS better manage this corridor as an ecosystem, in cooperation with our Canadian partners. I think this agreement is a model of cooperative conservation that can be used as a template for other communities.”

Also recently signed was an MOU between the USFWS and the Essex Region Conservation Authority, the lead organization of the Western Lake Erie Watersheds Priority Natural Area in southwest Ontario. Under this MOU Essex Region Conservation Authority and its partners have created a Canadian registry of lands and actions, and have initially added to it almost 4,000 acres of Canadian lands owned and managed by Essex Region Conservation Authority.

Essex Region Conservation Authority General Manager Richard Wyma stated that “it is an honour to work our U.S. partners to protect our natural heritage and enhance our world-class, outdoor, recreational opportunities. I believe it is possible that on the Canadian side we could see 12,000 acres of existing protected areas in southwest Ontario included in our international effort over the next ten years.”

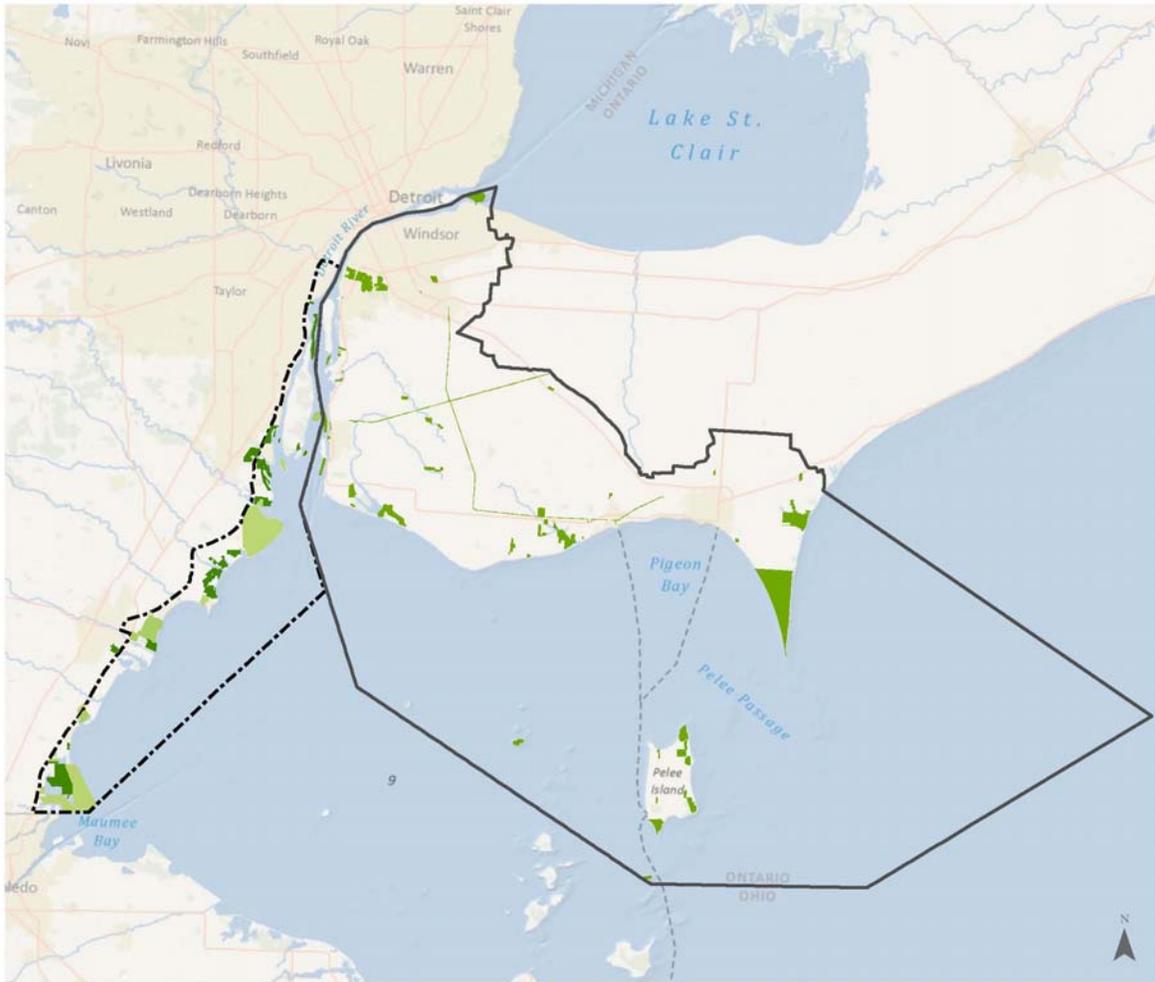
U.S. Congressman John D. Dingell, an avid outdoorsman and strong supporter of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, notes “I am proud to see how the U.S. and Canadian governments, businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and concerned citizens have joined forces to achieve conservation and outdoor recreation results that they could not have achieved on their own. We are building an international wildlife refuge that will one day soon protect over 25,000 acres of land in southeast Michigan and southwest Ontario for not only this generation, but generations to come.”

In 2001, the *Canada-U.S. Conservation Vision for the Lower Detroit River Ecosystem* called for the establishment of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (<http://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/a%20conservation%20vision%20for%20the%20lower%20detroit%20river%20ecosystem.pdf>). Since this signing and establishment of the Refuge in 2001, Canadian and U.S. partners have worked on State of the Strait Conferences, a sturgeon spawning reef off Fighting Island that represented the first ever fish habitat restoration project in the Great Lakes funded with both U.S. and Canadian resources, 51 soft shoreline engineering projects, a ByWays to FlyWays bird driving tour map, an ecosystem indicator project, restoration of over 1,000 acres of land with funding from North American Wetlands Conservation Act and Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and more.

The Detroit River International Wildlife 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 over 300 species of birds. It is the first international refuge in North America and one of the few urban ones. The Western Lake Erie Watersheds Priority Natural Area is the institutional mechanism for Canadian federal, provincial, and local partners to cooperatively work with U.S. partners on the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

The Michigan DNR is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. The mission of the USFWS 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 Essex Region Conservation Authority conserves natural resources in the Essex Region in partnership with member municipalities and the Province of Ontario for the benefit of present and future generations.

- END -



Legend

- United States Refuge Acquisition Boundary
- Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources Protected Lands
- Canadian Priority Natural Area Boundary
- Canadian Protected Lands