

## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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# News Release



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## **30 ACRES OF LAND IN MONROE COUNTY ADDED TO THE DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

**FRENCHTOWN TOWNSHIP, MICH.** – Today, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that 30 acres of wooded wetlands and uplands in Frenchtown Township, Monroe County, Michigan were purchased from Newport Beach Marina Corporation for inclusion in the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. This tract is located in the “Conservation Priority 1” area identified in the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge’s Comprehensive Conservation Plan – meaning that this land is deemed highest priority for conservation and inclusion in the Refuge. This tract is located adjacent to the Refuge’s Fix and Lagoon Beach (cooperatively managed with DTE Energy) units, and across Swan Creek from the Refuge’s Brancheau Unit.

These unique lands serve as important stopover habitat for migratory birds. In addition, the acquisition of these important lands will help extend an important wildlife corridor along western Lake Erie, help facilitate access to the Refuge’s Fix Unit, and help facilitate future hunting on the Fix Unit (as well as a portion of the Newport Beach Marina Corporation Tract). This land was purchased by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with funding from U.S. Department of Transportation for expansion of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

“These unique lands are an outstanding addition to the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge,” notes Congressman John Dingell. “This significant addition to the Refuge helps extend an important wildlife corridor along Lake Erie and helps protect our internationally-renowned ‘natural capital’ that enriches our quality of life and is a gift to future generations.”

The Newport Beach Marina Corporation tract is a significant acquisition for the Refuge because it contains remnant wet prairie, a nearly extinct habitat in the region. Remnant areas of wet prairie are the building blocks upon which the Refuge can reestablish larger and more functional wet prairie habitat by amplifying seed and plant material. These remnant areas are also important indicators, for Refuge staff, that this region did support wet prairie in the past and may be able to support wet prairie in the future. Wet prairie and its plant species that were once very abundant in the historic western Lake

Erie landscape were nearly eliminated during generations of wetland drainage and tillage. At special places like Newport Beach Marina Corporation tract, these species have escaped drainage and plowing by persisting in wet ditches that are mowed periodically, including tall sunflower (growing to nine foot in height), bottle gentian, blue-joint grass, prairie cordgrass, sensitive fern, mountain mint, ironweed, sedges, and many others. Simply put, these diverse plant communities produce a robust and diverse animal community with complex plant-animal interactions that are resilient to natural water level changes. This new tract provides a unique opportunity for the Refuge to capitalize on this remaining diversity and indeed expand it the future.

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge represents a new model for conservation – one that both restores habitats for wildlife in an urban area through public-private partnerships and provides a blueprint for bringing conservation to cities across the nation. The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge extends along 48 miles of lower Detroit River and western Lake Erie, and focuses on conserving, protecting, and restoring habitats for 30 species of waterfowl, 117 kinds of fish, and over 300 species of birds. The Refuge currently owns or cooperatively manages 5,817 acres of unique habitats that include islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, wet prairies, shoals and riverfront lands. To date, 3,797 acres of Essex Region Conservation Authority lands and 981 acres of City of Windsor lands have been added to a Canadian registry of lands, and 7,897 acres of Michigan Department of Natural Resources lands have been added to the U.S. registry of lands for conservation purposes. When totaled between Canada and U.S., 18,463 acres of land in southwest Ontario and southeast Michigan are now being collaboratively managed and protected for the benefit of wildlife and outdoor recreation in the spirit and intent of the 2001 Conservation Vision and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

More than 80 percent of Americans live in urban or suburban communities and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service values the role that urban refuges play in bringing conservation to urban areas and in providing innovative educational programming and volunteer opportunities. 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. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, and dedication and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).



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