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## News Release

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January 16, 2014

Marisa Lubeck

303-526-6694

[mlubeck@usgs.gov](mailto:mlubeck@usgs.gov)

Jim Boase

248-894-7594

[james\\_boase@fws.gov](mailto:james_boase@fws.gov)

Elizabeth LaPorte

734-647-0767

[elzblap@umich.edu](mailto:elzblap@umich.edu)

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# Huron-Erie Corridor Initiative partners receive prestigious Secretary of the Interior honor



ANN ARBOR, Mich—The Huron-Erie Corridor Initiative received a 2013 Department of the Interior (DOI) *Partners in Conservation* award today, which is one of the highest recognitions bestowed on organizations by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

“The Department of the Interior is proud to recognize the accomplishments of those who are innovating and collaborating in ways that address today’s complex conservation and stewardship challenges,” Secretary Jewell said at an awards ceremony at the Interior headquarters in Washington today. “These partnerships represent the gold standard for how Interior is doing business across the nation to power our future, strengthen tribal nations, conserve and enhance America’s great outdoors and engage the next generation.”

Representatives from the Huron-Erie Corridor Initiative, including the U.S. Geological Survey Great Lakes Science Center, Michigan Sea Grant (University of Michigan and Michigan State University), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Great Lakes Fishery Commission attended the 2013 *Partners in Conservation Awards* Recognition Event on January 16, at Main Interior in Washington, D.C. A local presentation of award certificates is also planned for February 5, during the Annual Meeting of the Huron-Erie Corridor Initiative, at Weber’s Inn in Ann Arbor. The initiative was honored for its relevant new science that will assist resource managers in making decisions concerning the restoration of native aquatic species and their habitats in the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers.

"The Huron-Erie Corridor Initiative partners have been committed to collaborative restoration activities and research since the early 2000s," said Leon Carl, USGS Midwest Regional Director and a founding member of the partnership. "Ten years later, we're recording the fruits of that commitment through ongoing fish spawning habitat restoration efforts and the development of a strategic restoration plan to carry us into the next ten years and beyond."

The *Partners in Conservation Awards* recognize outstanding examples of conservation legacies achieved when DOI engages groups and individuals representing a wide range of backgrounds, ages and interests to work collaboratively to renew lands and resources. The achievements of the Huron-Erie Corridor Initiative have been realized through the outstanding participation of diverse organizations on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border.

The St. Clair River, Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River, also known as the Huron-Erie corridor, are the international waters that connect Lake Huron to Lake Erie and provide habitat for over 65 species of fish. The region, which includes the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge and the Detroit International Wildlife Refuge, is part of the central Great Lakes flyway for millions of migratory waterfowl. It contains some of the largest and most diverse wetlands remaining in the region.

“I am indeed so proud of all these public and private partners who are working together on sound science in support of restoring this ecological corridor,” said Congressman John D. Dingell. “This critically important work is not only supporting the restoration of fish and wildlife populations, and their requisite habitats, but it is helping bring conservation into a major urban area where nearly seven million people live in the watershed and thereby helping develop the next generation of conservationists.”

Environmental changes in the corridor over time have resulted in the loss of habitat for fish and other organisms. The partners developed a plan to increase habitat for lake whitefish, lake sturgeon, walleye and other native fish populations, based on research suggesting that water flow, depth and temperature are important in the placement of spawning reefs. Pre- and post-construction monitoring demonstrated an immediate response by over 14 native fish species, including spawning by the commercially important lake whitefish, which was a first in over a century; use by the globally rare northern madtom; and spawning by lake sturgeon, which is listed as a threatened species in both Michigan and Ontario.

Seven additional fish spawning habitat projects are planned for construction in the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers by 2015. With funding support from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, over 20 acres of fish spawning habitat will be restored in these urban rivers by 2015.

The Huron-Erie Corridor Initiative is an international, collaborative partnership (<http://www.huron-erie.org/partners.html>) including federal, tribal, state, provincial, local governmental and non-governmental participants.

#### **Links:**

- Huron-Erie Corridor Initiative (<http://www.huron-erie.org>)
- Photos of the Initiative (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/miseagrant/sets/72157631098981272/>)
- Habitat restoration video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKzollX4Z50&feature=youtu.be>)
- News article and video (<http://www.ns.umich.edu/new/multimedia/videos/20385-construction-of-new-rock-spawning-reefs-will-help-great-lakes-native-fish>)

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