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40th Anniversary of Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Celebrated at Gibraltar Carlson High School on World Wetlands Day – February 9, 2011

Gibraltar, Michigan, USA – World Wetlands Day will be celebrated on February 9th at Gibraltar Carlson High School with a Wetlands Expo (featuring displays from organizations dedicated to wetland preservation) from 9 AM-3 PM and a program that begins at 1 PM, featuring U.S. National Ramsar Committee Chairperson Suzanne Pittenger-Slear, Ms. Lynette Dowler, Plant Director of DTE Energy’s Trenton Channel and River Rouge Power Plants, and Andrew Hartz, District Supervisor of Land and Water Management Division of Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. This event is open to the public from 1-3 PM.

World Wetlands Day is celebrated internationally each year to raise public awareness of wetland values and benefits, and to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands. It is celebrated each year on the anniversary of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention) in Ramsar, Iran, on 2 February 1971.

The theme of this year’s World Wetlands Day is wetlands and forests to highlight the critical role that forests play in the hydrologic cycle and the health of wetlands. These wetlands are important as they deliver significant ecosystem services, are cradles of biological diversity, and support a high diversity of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates.

In 2010, Humbug Marsh was designated Michigan’s first Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. Humbug Marsh, located on the lower end of the Detroit River in the cities of Gibraltar and Trenton, is considered an internationally important wetland because of its ecological importance in the Detroit River corridor and the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem. Humbug Marsh is also a part of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, and represents the last mile of natural shoreline on the U.S. mainland of the Detroit River. Humbug Marsh serves as a vital habitat for 51 species of fish, 90 species of plants, 154 species of birds, seven species of reptiles and amphibians, and 37 species of dragonflies and damselflies.

“I am honored to be part of this 40th Anniversary Celebration of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands Treaty,” noted Suzanne Pittenger-Slear, Chair of the U.S. National Ramsar Committee. “During February, Ramsar Sites in over 160 countries will be celebrating this important day. I am excited to join in the activities at the Humbug Marsh Ramsar Site and am pleased to spend the day with the community. The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge has established partnerships for wetland conservation that are important to Michigan and the Great Lakes Basin, and are a model for the nation.”

“It is truly a privilege for DTE Energy to be part of this World Wetlands Day celebration,” noted Paul Fessler, Vice President, Fossil Generation, DTE Energy. “We at DTE Energy are proud of our environmental work, which includes a particular focus on wetlands protection. In fact, four of our power plants are within the boundaries of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. And at our Monroe Power Plant, we have recreated wetlands on marginal farmland, providing wetland habitat for wildlife and an outdoor classroom for high school students.”

“Michigan is a state with an abundance of freshwater resources, rare habitats, and exceptional recreational opportunities,” noted Director Dan Wyant of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment. “The World Wetlands Day event is a wonderful time to celebrate our rich wetland resources, and encourage understanding and appreciation of these critical resources. Humbug Marsh is truly a gem in our state, and we are extremely proud to have our first Ramsar Wetland of International Importance.”

“I am indeed so proud that we have saved Humbug Marsh, that it has been designated Michigan’s first and only Wetland of International Significance, and that you will be celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Ramsar Convention,” notes Congressman John Dingell. “This Ramsar designation is an enormous source of pride for our people in southeast Michigan and is a critical element of quality of life for us, our children, and our grandchildren.”

The Detroit River IWR covers 48 miles of shoreline along the Detroit River and western Lake Erie (www.fws.gov/midwest/detroitriver/). The Refuge focuses on conserving, protecting and restoring habitat for 30 species of waterfowl, 117 kinds of fish, and over 300 species of birds. The Detroit River IWR is the first international refuge in North America. Unique habitats being managed in the Refuge include islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals and riverfront lands.

For more information, contact John Hartig of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (734-692-7608), John Austerberry of DTE Energy (313-235-8859), Anne Hokanson of Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (517-241-4506), or Bill Stevenson, Principal of Gibraltar Carlson High School (30550 W. Jefferson Ave., Gibraltar, MI; 734-379-7100).



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