



For Immediate Release: February 2, 2010

Humbug Marsh Will Become Michigan's First Wetland of International Importance Under the Ramsar Convention

Gibraltar, Michigan – The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. National Ramsar Committee are pleased to announce that Humbug Marsh will become Michigan's first Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty that was signed in Ramsar, Iran in 1971 that provides a framework for voluntary international protection of wetlands. Countries that sign the treaty demonstrate their commitment to the conservation and wise use of wetlands as a contribution toward sustainable development throughout the world. Humbug Marsh is considered an internationally important wetland because of its ecological importance in the Detroit River corridor and the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem. It will be the 27th Ramsar site to be listed in the U.S. and will join approximately 1,880 sites listed worldwide.

Humbug Marsh is located on the lower end of the Detroit River in the cities of Trenton and Gibraltar. It represents a significant portion of the last unaltered U.S. wetlands in the Detroit River and the last mile of natural shoreline on the river's U.S. mainland. Humbug is part of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, the only international refuge in North America. The 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.

To receive this prestigious designation, a wetland must meet at least one of nine criteria defined by the Ramsar Convention, such as supporting rare species, providing a significant hydrological function, or serving as essential habitat for large numbers of fish and waterfowl. Humbug Marsh has managed to survive past and ongoing threats of development, and has been able to maintain important wetland qualities. It meets five of the nine Ramsar criteria.

Director Rebecca Humphries of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment recognized the significance of Humbug Marsh, saying “The preservation of wetlands like Humbug Marsh is a critical component of protecting our Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem as a whole. The receipt of this designation stands as a recognition of the efforts of those who have worked tirelessly to preserve Humbug Marsh.”

The Ramsar designation is being celebrated at Gibraltar Carlson High School today, “World Wetlands Day”, in a school assembly. Events celebrating wetland resources are held on this date every year throughout the world.

“World Wetlands Day 2010 is a great day to emphasize Michigan’s commitment to preserving and protecting vital wetland ecosystems throughout the state,” notes Governor Jennifer Granholm. “This is another example of state, federal, and local agencies and organizations partnering to recognize Michigan’s unique resources. It is truly an honor to have Humbug Marsh designated as Michigan’s first Ramsar site.”

“The designation of Humbug Marsh as a Ramsar site acknowledges the global significance of the habitat found within our Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge,” notes Congressman John Dingell. “For all the people who fought to save Humbug Marsh, this acknowledgement by the Ramsar Convention is an international endorsement of their dedication to the vision of a renewed Detroit River. This will be an enormous source of pride for our people in Southeast Michigan; it provides even more compelling evidence of the importance of the Refuge as an essential element of our quality of life here as well as its draw as an eco-tourism site not only from around the region, but now from around the world.”

Humbug Marsh is open for special birding, environmental education, and outreach events (see calendar at: www.fws.gov/midwest/DetroitRiver/documents/2010Calendar.pdf). Humbug Marsh has nature trails, an environmental education shelter for use by schools, two wildlife observation decks, a wetland boardwalk, and learning stations. Immediately north and adjacent to Humbug Marsh is Wayne County’s Refuge Gateway, the future home of the refuge’s Visitor Center and where \$750,000 of wetland and habitat restoration occurred in 2009. It is anticipated that thousands of students and visitors will visit Humbug Marsh annually.

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 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.

The mission of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment is to protect and conserve Michigan’s air, water, and natural resources. 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.

For more information, contact Tracy Collin of Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (517-241-4506), John Hartig of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (734-692-7608), or Rebecca Robinson of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (734-692-7672).

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