



**January 8, 2016
News Release
For Immediate Release**

Construction Begins On the School Ship Dock and Fishing Pier at Refuge Gateway in Trenton, Michigan

TRENTON, MICH. – Downriver Community Conference, on behalf of Wayne County, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and many other partners, has awarded a contract to E.C. Korneffel Company of Trenton, Michigan for construction of a school ship dock and world-class fishing pier at the Refuge Gateway in Trenton, Michigan. As the future site of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge’s (DRIWR) 12,000 square foot, Gold LEED-Certified Visitor Center, the Refuge Gateway will welcome thousands of projected annual visitors and serve as a hub for outdoor recreation and environmental education in southeast Michigan.

E.C. Korneffel Co. is a full-service marine contractor that performs work accessible by both land and barge. It is a third generation, family-owned business established in 1950. E.C. Korneffel is well known for its work in Metropolitan Detroit, the Great Lakes, and the nation. Examples of projects completed in Metropolitan Detroit include: Crescent Sail Yacht Club in Grosse Pointe Farms, the wharf at the Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority, the Detroit RiverWalk near Stroh River Place and Chene Park, the General Motors World Headquarters’ Riverfront Plaza and Promenade, Uniroyal Remediation project, Grosse Pointe Yacht Club Harbor Reconstruction project, and the Village of Grosse Pointe Shores Marina. Korneffel prides itself on innovation and quality construction, and delivering projects on time and within budget.

Construction began in December and all underwater substructure construction of the breakwater and fishing pier will be completed by March 15th to avoid the critical fish spawning season in the Detroit River. Full project completion is projected for December 2016.

The boat dock and fishing pier will extend 745’ into the Detroit River to provide a free, universally accessible, shore-based fishing experience. The project includes a boardwalk, fishing pier, floating dock, seating areas, shade structures, and interpretive signage. Areas accessible from the boardwalk include deeper waters of the Trenton Channel, well known as part of the “Walleye Capital of the World,” and shallower waters rich in panfish. This fishing pier will allow the public to fish in water depths currently only available to those with a personal watercraft. Visitation will be enhanced by local sport fishing clubs, such as the Downriver Walleye Federation, who plan to use the facility to host annual shore-based fishing tournaments.

The Refuge Gateway is a former industrial brownfield that has been cleaned up and restored as the gateway to the DRIWR. It is located adjacent to Refuge’s Humbug Marsh, Michigan’s *only* “Wetland of International Importance” designated by the International Ramsar Convention and the last mile of undeveloped shoreline along the U.S. mainland of the Detroit River. As such, this

ecosystem has exceptional biodiversity for a major urban area. This location is famous for trophy walleye fishing throughout the Great Lakes and is easily accessible to nearly seven million people living within a 45-minute drive. This facility will provide one of the premier shore-fishing experiences in the Great Lakes and will also support vessel-based environmental educational opportunities for school children under Michigan Sea Grant's Great Lakes Education Program.

The new Refuge Gateway and Visitor Center will be outstanding additions to Wayne County's diverse Parks system that already includes more than 5,600 acres of green space and 35 parks. This project connects Wayne County's Elizabeth Park, Lake Erie Metropark, and Michigan's only Wetland of International Importance – Humbug Marsh.

"The school ship dock and fishing pier will create more recreational and educational nature destinations that thousands of Wayne County residents and visitors will enjoy each year," said Wayne County Executive Warren C. Evans. "The new pier will make deep water fishing easier and the school ship dock will allow students to participate in Michigan Sea Grant's Great Lakes Education Program. The Refuge Gateway will soon prove to be a major asset for Wayne County and we are excited that construction is underway."

"If you love being outdoors and enjoy the Detroit River, this is the destination you must visit," notes James Perry, Executive Director of Downriver Community Conference.

The DRIWR covers 48 miles of shoreline along the lower Detroit River and western basin of Lake Erie. It stretches from southwest Detroit to the Ohio-Michigan border. The Refuge focuses on conserving, protecting and restoring habitat for 300 species of birds, including 30 species of waterfowl, 23 species of raptors, 31 species of shorebirds, and for 117 species of fish. The Refuge currently owns or cooperatively manages 5,834 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., 18,509 acres of land in southwest Ontario and southeast Michigan are now being collaboratively managed and protected for the benefit of conservation and outdoor recreation in the spirit and intent of the 2001 Conservation Vision and the DRIWR.

The DRIWR is proud to be designated one of the 14 priority urban refuges throughout the nation charged with bringing conservation to cities and helping make nature part of everyday urban life. It is also the only international wildlife refuge in North America. Today, 80% of all Americans and Canadians live in urban areas. Most urban residents are disconnected from the natural world. This important work is being done to help make sure that a growing urban population values natural resources and to help inspire the next generation of conservationists in urban areas because that is now where most people on our planet live.

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Construction begins on school ship dock and fishing pier at Refuge Gateway, January 2016 (photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

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