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School of Natural Resources and Environment and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Celebrate 10-Year Partnership for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

Ann Arbor, MI – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and University of Michigan’s School of Natural Resources and Environment (SNRE) are pleased to announce that SNRE alumna Catherine Dennis has been hired as the landscape designer for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (IWR) and will be working on:

- Ecological restoration of the Refuge Gateway in Trenton, Michigan that is adjacent to Michigan’s only “Wetland of International Importance” designated under the Ramsar Convention (i.e., Humbug Marsh) and the future home of the refuge’s Visitor Center;
- Construction of a major fishing pier and school ship dock at the Refuge Gateway; and
- Greenway trail connections.

Catherine Dennis has a Masters of Landscape Architecture from SNRE and a passion for urban restoration, and has had experience in designing landscapes in the private and public sectors, as well as design of school yard habitats.

Catherine Dennis is the fourth SNRE alumnae to work at the Detroit River IWR in the last 10 years. Her SNRE predecessors included:

- Emily Wilke who worked on the Detroit River-Western Lake Erie Indicator Project that compiled 30 or more years of data on 50 indicators and performed a comprehensive assessment of ecological health;
- Rebecca Robinson who worked on the design and construction of trails, a boardwalk, a pedestrian bridge, and an environmental education shelter in Humbug Marsh, and the daylighting of Monguagon Creek in the Refuge Gateway; and
- Allison Krueger who worked on brownfield cleanup of the Refuge Gateway (i.e., a former automotive manufacturing facility), restoration of coastal wetlands and riparian buffer habitat along the Detroit River, and upland habitat restoration, including planting 350 trees with 200-300 pound rootballs.

“I am indeed so proud that we have been able to form this partnership with University of Michigan and to utilize the knowledge, skills, and passion of their graduates to become an international leader in bringing conservation to cities,” noted Congressman John D. Dingell. “I look forward to this partnership continuing to realize our goal of protecting 25,000 acres of land in southeast Michigan and southwest Ontario for conservation and outdoor recreation as part of a strategy to improve quality of life and foster a sustainable society.”

“It is a privilege and honor to be a partner in building the only international wildlife refuge in North America and to have SNRE students actively involved in restoration efforts of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge,” noted Bob Grese, Professor of Landscape Architecture. “We look forward to sustaining this partnership and helping make nature part of everyday urban life through the refuge.”

The Detroit River IWR extends along the shoreline of the 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. Unique habitats being managed in the refuge include islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, 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 the Canadian registry of lands for the refuge, and 7,897 acres of Michigan Department of Natural Resources lands have been added to the U.S. registry of lands that already includes 5,787 acres of lands owned and/or cooperatively managed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. When totaled between Canada and U.S., 18,462 acres of land in southwest Ontario and southeast Michigan are now being managed collaboratively for conservation and outdoor recreation in the spirit and intent of the 2001 Conservation Vision and the Detroit River IWR.

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.

The School of Natural Resources and Environment's overarching objective is to contribute to the protection of the Earth's resources and the achievement of a sustainable society. Through research, teaching and outreach, faculty, staff and students are devoted to generating knowledge and developing policies, techniques and skills to help practitioners manage and conserve natural and environmental resources to meet the full range of human needs on a sustainable basis.

For more information, contact John Hartig, Refuge Manager (734.692.7608; john_hartig@fws.gov) or Bob Grese (734-763-0645; bgrese@umich.edu).

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