

Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Large Lakes Research Station
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News Release



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COMMENT PERIOD FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC USE ON DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE'S SUGAR ISLAND UNIT BEGINS FEBRUARY 6TH

GROSSE ILE, MICHIGAN – A 30-day public comment period on an Environmental Assessment for additional public use of Sugar Island, a unit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR), begins today, February 6th, and runs through March 7, 2013. Alternatives for additional public access to Sugar Island were developed by refuge staff based on input and recommendations from a Public Workshop held on September 25, 2012 at the Grosse Ile Middle School in Grosse Ile Township, Michigan.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluated four alternatives for additional public use of the island which included: *No Action*, *Full Island Public Access*, *East and West Beach Access with a Trail Linking the Beaches*, and the Preferred Alternative, *West Beach Public Access Only*.

Under the proposed preferred alternative, public use of Sugar Island's west beach would be opened during daylight hours, the Saturday prior to Memorial Day through Labor Day. The area opened for public use would be clearly marked with signs and a single panel kiosk would be located on the beach to: inform visitors about rules and regulations pertaining to the island; interpret the mission and purpose of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge in the context of the National Wildlife Refuge System; educate visitors about the ecological significance of Sugar Island; and inform visitors about the island's unique history. Prohibitions on the island would include: fires, alcohol, camping, glass containers, fireworks, public access to concrete piers, staging for scuba diving, and unleashed pets. This alternative does not allow for the provision of public restrooms. In addition, a "tip line" telephone number will be provided for visitors to report problems and violations.

Sugar Island is a 30-acre, uninhabited island located in Grosse Ile Township at the mouth of the Detroit River that was purchased earlier this year with federal funds for conservation of fish and wildlife habitats. Additionally, in conjunction with other unique Refuge units, including the Gibraltar Bay Unit, Calf Island Unit, Humbug Marsh Unit, and Lake Erie Metropark Unit, Sugar Island is part of a "conservation crescent" surrounding the southern end of Grosse Ile. These unique habitats serve as important stopover habitat for migratory birds and important spawning and nursery habitat for fishes.

Public participation has been vital to the success of this project and the Service encourages your continued involvement. The EA will be on public review and public comments will be accepted through March 5,

2013. The document is available for review and comment electronically on the Refuge's website at: www.fws.gov/refuge/Detroit_River/refuge_units/sugar_island.html

Hard copies of the document will also be available for in-house review and comment at the following locations:

- The Refuge Headquarters – 9311 Groh Road, Grosse Ile, MI 48138; 734-692-7600
- The Grosse Ile Township Office – 9601 Groh Road, Grosse Ile, MI 48138; 734-676-4422
- The Dorsch Library - 18 East First Street, Monroe, MI 48161; 734-241-7878
- The Trenton Veterans Memorial Library - 2790 Westfield Road, Trenton, MI 48183; 734-676-9777
- The Bacon Memorial Library – 45 Vinewood Street, Wyandotte, MI 48192; 734-246-8357

Comments may also be sent to Refuge staff at the address below:

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The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge incorporates more than 5,700 acres along 48 miles of the lower Detroit River and western 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, and 31 species of shorebirds, and for 117 species of fish. It is the first international wildlife refuge in North America and one of few urban refuges in the nation. Unique habitats being managed within the Refuge include islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals, and riparian waterfront lands. Learn more about the Detroit River International Wildlife refuge, visit www.fws.gov/refuge/Detroit_River.

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 Service is both a leader and trusted partners in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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