



**FOR RELEASE ON MAY 30, 2008**

## **REFUGE SUPPORT GROUP PLANTS PARK SHORELINE**

**TRENTON, MI** – The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance will finish planting a stretch of shoreline along Elizabeth Park on Thursday June 5, 2008 with the help of volunteers. The project is an effort to improve habitat for native wildlife and improve water quality in the canal. Elizabeth Park is in Wayne County and is Michigan’s oldest county park; it is also within the boundaries of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

The plantings include native trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses. Native plants are plants that grow naturally in Michigan and have not been brought here from another continent, such as Asia. Native plants have many benefits to wildlife because animals have evolved to live with them; they provide food, cover, and shelter for animals from butterflies to mallards.

Native plants also help improve water quality. When planted along the shoreline, native plants clean polluted water before it flows into the canal, intercepting nutrients and dirt. Their deep roots also help to anchor the shoreline and slow surface runoff from roads and parking lots.

Mary Bohling, Michigan Sea Grant Educator & project manager, says “The addition of native plants on the shoreline will provide food and habitat for native wildlife, help resolve some of the erosion issues at the park, and improve water quality in the canal.”

The area has been fenced off to keep people from trampling the new plantings, which include large trees as well as tiny seeds that are just beginning to sprout. In a few years, the area will be blooming with wildflowers. It often takes a few years for native plantings to look “established” above ground because native plants first put their energy into building big, strong root systems.

One concern of the Alliance is all of the domestic ducks that have taken over the park. They are called Muscovy, and are a non-native duck that is raised for food. The fowl were most likely illegally released into the park when they outgrew a backyard. The ducks are harmful to native waterfowl such as mallards and Canada geese through their aggressive and competitive nature. Steve Dushane, DRIWR Assistant Refuge Manager, comments, “The removal of the Muscovy ducks at Elizabeth Park is essential to the success of the current project as well as any future restoration projects in the park. If they are allowed to spread to other areas of the Refuge, such as Humbug Marsh, their impact could be very detrimental to native wildlife.” Many have noticed their dramatic increase in numbers in Elizabeth Park in the last year. It is illegal to feed wildlife in the park, and the Alliance is working with Wayne County to remove the Muscovy from the park.

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The project is funded through a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program to IWRA with in-kind support from DTE Energy, ECT, Inc., Friends of the Detroit River, Michigan Sea Grant, Wayne County and interested citizens.

The Alliance worked with Nativescape.net to plan and implement the shoreline enhancement project. The group is looking for volunteers to help with the planting on Thursday, June 5, if you are interested, please call Lisa Appel at (734) 692-7671 or e-mail [iwr\\_alliance@yahoo.com](mailto:iwr_alliance@yahoo.com) to sign up to help.

The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that builds the capacity of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to deliver the mission of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Major Alliance funding partners in 2008 include ITC Transmission, BASF Corporation, DTE Energy Foundation, General Motors Corporation, and Praxair.

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