



METROPOLITAN AFFAIRS COALITION

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Rehabilitation of Detroit River Shoreline Launched at Grosse Ile Nature Area

The Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy announced the second phase of shoreline rehabilitation along the Detroit River at the Grosse Ile Nature Area. This innovative project is recreating 970 feet of natural shoreline using cutting edge soft engineering techniques and will be completed in 2005. Together with the first phase project completed last year, this will mean that the Conservancy will have restored almost a quarter mile of Detroit River shoreline.

This is a vitally important project because about 97% of natural coastal wetland habitats along the Detroit River have been lost to development and hard engineering of shorelines (use of concrete and steel to stabilize shorelines). The Conservancy will be using state of the art soft engineering techniques to cost-effectively reduce erosion, stabilize shoreline, enhance wildlife habitat, and improve aesthetics.

The project's budget is \$102,000 with the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy receiving funding support from several sources. Metropolitan Affairs Coalition (MAC), as part of its Greater Detroit American Heritage River Initiative (AHR), awarded a \$20,000 challenge grant to attract other funding. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Program provided \$20,000 and the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control administered by the Great Lakes Commission provided \$30,000. In-kind support is being contributed by the Grosse Ile Nature Conservancy, Grosse Ile Schools, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority.

Commenting on the project, Congressman John Dingell noted, "It is through partnerships like this that we are building the only International Wildlife Refuge in North America. This soft engineering project at the Grosse Ile Nature Area demonstrates how innovative collaboration can recreate a natural shoreline in the Refuge, protect wildlife habitats and native populations, and enhance quality of life and community pride in our region. The Conservancy, MAC, and its funding partners are to be congratulated".

The Conservancy has retained Nativescape, LLC, a native ecosystem, wetland, and soil bioengineering-consulting firm, to oversee the shoreline rehabilitation work. Nativescape will install an aquatic shelf using a biodegradable plastic tube (fibersock or Soil Sock) and compost as the base. Clean composted recycled yard waste and small stone will then be pneumatically pumped into the tube along with a mixture of native

emergent plant seeds. The fibersock will then be placed at the edge of the proposed new shoreline and anchored in place. The compost mixture will be back filled into the space between the tube and the old shoreline creating a new aquatic shelf. A geofabric blanket will be placed over this back fill to stabilize the area until new plants grow. Grosse Ile high school students will plant the emergent plant roots in the aquatic shelf.

This project is one of 18 AHR demonstration projects for soft engineering of shorelines along the Detroit River (see link for additional information: <http://www.tellusnews.com/ahr/softeng.html>). The Detroit River has the distinction of being one of 14 rivers to be honored with an American Heritage River designation in 1998. In 2001, the Detroit River received a Canadian Heritage River designation, making it the first international heritage river system in North America. Also in 2001, the Detroit River became home to the first International Wildlife Refuge in North America.

From more information, contact Dr. Bruce Jones (President of the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy) at 734-676-6657, Mr. David Sanders (Vice President of the Metropolitan Affairs Coalition) at 313-961-2270, or Dr. John Hartig (Refuge Manager for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) at 734-692-7608.

The Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy is an independent, non-profit corporation founded in 1993 by Grosse Ile residents to preserve in perpetuity significant land and water resources within the community. The Grosse Ile Nature Area is owned by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and managed jointly with Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy.

Metropolitan Affairs Coalition (MAC) is a regional public/private partnership dedicated to enhancing the quality of life and economy of Southeast Michigan. The American Heritage River Initiative of MAC identifies and executes projects that protect and enhance environmental resources, promote appropriate economic development, and celebrate history and culture along the 32-mile Detroit River.

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