



News Release

*Great Lakes - Big Rivers Region
External Affairs Office*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 24, 2004
EA04-52

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John Hartig Selected as First Full-Time Manager for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

As a young boy in the 1960s, John Hartig relished his days spent fishing in the Detroit River in southeast Michigan. Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that the 51 year-old Trenton, Mich., native will become the first full-time refuge manager at the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge,

Hartig begins his new job July 10. As refuge manager, he will oversee operations on North America's only international wildlife refuge which will conserve, protect and restore habitat for 29 species of waterfowl, 65 kinds of fish and 300 species of migratory birds on more than 5,000 acres along the lower Detroit River in southeast Michigan. Hartig replaces Doug Brewer who was on temporary assignment from Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in Ohio. Until a more permanent refuge office can be established, Hartig will be stationed at the Environmental Protection Agency's Large Lakes Research Station on Grosse Ile.

"I'm thrilled to be a member of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and help shape the future of this magnificent resource," Hartig said. "The Detroit River refuge is a huge source of community pride. Over the decades, many local residents have lost their connection to the outdoors. The refuge is helping people to reconnect to the river and its resources. Best of all, there is a huge base of local support for the refuge and what it brings to southeast Michigan."

Hartig brings more than 25 years of experience in environmental science and natural resource management to his new position. For the past five years, he has served as River Navigator for the Greater Detroit American Heritage River Initiative. As River Navigator he worked with Detroit River communities and businesses to identify and implement high priority projects that foster environmental stewardship, promote environmentally sustainable economic development, and celebrate history and culture. Prior to becoming River Navigator, he spent 14 years working for the International Joint Commission on the Canada-U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

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"I have enjoyed being Detroit River Navigator and it's good to know that the momentum we have achieved for the American Heritage River (AHR) will continue under the direction of the Metropolitan Affairs Coalition (MAC)," Hartig said. "As refuge manager I see MAC and its AHR Initiative as a valuable partner in collaborating to enhance the river and wildlife habitat."

He has authored or co-authored more than 70 publications on the Great Lakes, including co-editing the book, "UNDER RAPS: Toward Grassroots Ecological Democracy in the Great Lakes Basin" and a new book, "Honoring Our Detroit River, Caring for Our Home." John has received numerous awards for his many years of work on Great Lakes' issues including the 2003 Anderson-Everett Award from the International Association for Great Lakes Research, the 2003 Community Luminary Award from the DTE Energy Foundation, and the 1993 Sustainable Development Award for Civic Leadership from Global Tomorrow Coalition.

"John brings very unique talents to a unique wildlife refuge. We're fortunate to have him as part of the Service's refuge team." said Barry Christenson, area refuge supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Great Lakes-Big Rivers Region headquarters in Minneapolis, Minn.

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge was established in December 2001. The refuge is the result of an unprecedented partnership of government agencies, businesses, conservation groups, landowners and private citizens on both sides of the border. Located at the intersection of the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways, an estimated three million ducks, geese, swans and coots migrate annually through the region. More than 300,000 diving ducks stop each year to feed on wild celery beds in the river. Despite being a heavily traveled corridor for Great Lakes' shipping, the Detroit River is also known for its duck hunting and fishing, activities the Service plans to continue on parts of the refuge.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 Fish and Wildlife Management offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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