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## **UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDED METROPOLITAN AFFAIRS COALITION (MAC)-DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE FELLOWSHIP**

Rebecca Sowder, a graduate student at the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment, has been awarded a prestigious, one-year fellowship to work on projects common to Metropolitan Affairs Coalition's Greater Detroit American Heritage River Initiative and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Rebecca is pursuing a Masters Degree in Landscape Architecture at the School of Natural Resources and Environment. She brings both a strong academic background, with an undergraduate degree in environmental science, and practical work experience, with Safe Passage in Guatemala City, Stevens Nature Center in North Carolina, Wilderness Ventures, and Habitat for Humanity, to this fellowship.

Rebecca's fellowship responsibilities will include working with partners to design and oversee construction of an environmental education shelter and interpretive trails in the refuge's Humbug Marsh in Gibraltar and Trenton, and helping coordinate a wetland restoration project at the refuge's Brancheau Unit in Monroe County. This is a unique fellowship opportunity because it gives a student an opportunity to work on North America's only International Heritage River System and only International Wildlife Refuge. Recently, southeast Michigan and southwest Ontario have received international acclaim for their innovative use of public-private partnerships to promote conservation, further environmentally-sustainable economic development, provide exceptional, close-to-home, recreational opportunities, and enhance quality of life.

Congressman John D. Dingell notes that "this fellowship is truly unique in that it will use landscape architecture skills and innovative public-private partnerships to build facilities that will offer exceptional outdoor experiences in environmental education and natural resource interpretation." Dingell said, "This fellowship is also unique because it places a premium on educating and developing the next generation of conservationists."

Rosina Bierbaum, Dean of the School of Natural Resources and Environment, commented, "Rebecca is a perfect choice for this prestigious fellowship – she embodies the design expertise and dedication to environmental preservation and community outreach necessary to building successful partnerships to achieve Refuge and American Heritage River goals."

Metropolitan Affairs Coalition (MAC) is a regional public-private partnership dedicated to enhancing the quality of life and economy of southeast Michigan. Under its Greater Detroit American Heritage Initiative, MAC undertakes projects that protect and enhance environmental resources, promote economic development, and celebrate history and culture along the Detroit River. <http://www.mac-web.org>

The Detroit International Wildlife Refuge covers 48 miles of shoreline along the lower Detroit River and the western basin of Lake Erie. It focuses on conserving, protecting and restoring habitat for 29 species of waterfowl, 65 kinds of fish and 300 species of migratory birds. <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/detroitriver/index.html>

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