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For Immediate Release

Two Innovative Shoreline Projects to Improve Fishing Opportunities at River Rouge's Belanger Park

Two projects will rehabilitate Detroit River shoreline on the upstream and downstream sides of River Rouge's Belanger Park to improve fishing opportunities for children and families. In the first project, United States Steel Corporation has committed to rehabilitate approximately 2,000 feet of shoreline downstream of Belanger Park as part of an ongoing effort by U.S. Steel to improve the environment at its Great Lakes facility, which it acquired from National Steel. The second project is immediately upstream of Belanger Park and involves a unique coalition of partners who are planning to restore to natural condition 180 feet of river shoreline at the DTE Energy Rouge Power Plant in the City of River Rouge.

In both projects "soft-engineering" will be used to establish a natural shoreline, reduce erosion, and achieve shoreline stability and safety, while also enhancing habitat and improving aesthetics. These projects will create fish habitat, especially for small minnows, sunfishes, walleye, and small mouth bass – which means better fishing opportunities for children and families at River Rouge's only public waterfront park – Belanger Park. (For more information on shoreline soft engineering along the Detroit River, see <http://www.fws.gov/detroitriver/ahr/softeng.html>).

U.S. Steel has retained the services of Nativescape, LLC, a native ecosystem, wetland, and soil-bioengineering firm, to oversee its \$200,000 shoreline rehabilitation project. Design work begins this spring, with full-scale construction to be completed by September 2005. The project was undertaken in connection with the settlement of an enforcement action taken by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality for violations of air law. With a combination of award winning soft-engineering techniques and native ecosystem reconstruction, U.S. Steel's Detroit River shoreline will be restored to a more natural state. The project will create a number of ecosystems that will benefit aquatic and terrestrial wildlife: wetlands that provide spawning and fingerling habitat, shoreline shade cover and water cooling, and an upland buffer to provide water quality protection.

Partners in the project at the DTE Energy Rouge Power Plant include the City of River Rouge, DTE Energy, Metropolitan Affairs Coalition, Wildlife Habitat Council, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Friends of the Detroit River, Michigan Sea Grant, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Metropolitan Affairs Coalition has issued a challenge grant to help generate project funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Program, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Five Star Grant Program, and DTE Energy. Also, the City of River Rouge and DTE Energy will be providing the heavy equipment needed to reconfigure the shoreline and remove and recycle broken concrete. The total project cost is \$49,000 and it is anticipated that all funding will be in place so that work can commence in fall 2005 and be completed in 2006.

Commenting on these projects, Congressman John Dingell noted, "It is through innovative partnerships like these that we are building North America's only International Wildlife Refuge. This is critically important because we have lost to development 97% of the Detroit River's natural coastal wetland habitats. These projects represent a net gain in habitat for our river and refuge."

Mayor Greg Joseph of the City of River Rouge noted that, "These two shoreline rehabilitation projects are so important to reclaiming our waterfront and enhancing fishing opportunities for our children. Like our recent construction of the Mariners' Memorial Lighthouse in Belanger Park, these shoreline improvements will be a major source of community pride."

The Detroit River has the distinction of being one of 14 rivers to be honored with an American Heritage River designation. In 2001, the Detroit River also 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.

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 Initiative of MAC undertakes projects that protect and enhance environmental resources, promote economic development, and celebrate history and culture along the Detroit River.

Contacts: Dr. John Hartig, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (734.692.7608); John Armstrong, U.S. Steel (412.433.6792); Roberta Urbani, DTE Energy (313.235.8624); David Sanders, Metropolitan Affairs Coalition (313.961.2270); Chris Lehr, Nativescape (517.456.9696).