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**Media Release**  
**For Immediate Release**

## **Provincial and Federal Funding Completes Detroit River Sturgeon Habitat Restoration**

*LaSalle, Ontario* – Construction of a sturgeon spawning reef will soon be completed as a result of Provincial and Federal funding announcements at Gil Maure Park today in LaSalle. Bruce Crozier, M.P.P. Essex, has announced that the Province of Ontario is contributing \$65,000 towards Phase 2 of this restoration project and Jeff Watson, M.P., has announced that the Federal Government is contributing an additional \$60,000. These contributions help facilitate the goal of returning this spectacular Lake Sturgeon fish to its historical abundance. The project is situated at the north east end of Fighting Island in the Detroit River and is the first ever fish habitat restoration project in the Great Lakes undertaken with Canadian and U.S. funding.

“Contributing to this project is how the Provincial Government is a strong environmental leader on issues that cut across all areas of public policy,” said Member of Provincial Parliament Bruce Crozier. “I am impressed with the magnitude of this project. The number of public and private partners who have come on board to restore an important part of the Detroit River’s fisheries is commendable.”

“This is the first time both Canadian and U.S. money is being pooled for a common fish habitat rehabilitation project in the Great Lakes,” notes U.S. Congressman John Dingell. “This sturgeon reef construction project is precedent setting and shows the strength of our U.S.-Canada partnership for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.”

“We are taking real action, with our U.S. partners, to rebuild a valuable shared resource and its biodiversity,” said Canadian Member of Parliament Jeff Watson. “The Federal Government is very proud to be part of this initiative to strategically restore a natural habitat for this local fish off Fighting Island.”

The Lake Sturgeon is a remnant of the dinosaur age and can grow to over eight feet in length and weigh over 200 pounds. It is listed as either threatened or endangered in 19 of 20 states in the U.S. In Canada, it has been identified as threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife. Lake Sturgeon is endemic to the Great Lakes and, historically, the Huron-Erie Corridor was one of the most productive waters for Lake Sturgeon in North America.

“The Essex Region Conservation Authority understands the critical importance in achieving a sustainable environment for this region, and are pleased to be the collaborative partner in this restoration,” said Ken Schmidt, General Manager of the Essex Region Conservation Authority.

In 2001, Lake Sturgeon spawning was documented in the Detroit River for the first time in over 20 years, but their numbers are estimated to be only 1% of their original population. Scientists determined that the lack of spawning habitat is one of the factors limiting population growth.

Historically, the area surrounding Fighting Island was well known as an important spawning and nursery area for Lake Sturgeon and thus was targeted as a potential habitat construction site.

The success of this project has resulted from the collaboration of many public and private sector organizations. Partner organizations are Environment Canada, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ontario Great Lakes Renewal Foundation, Essex Region Conservation Authority, U.S. Geological Survey – Great Lakes Science Center, Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Detroit River Canadian Cleanup, BASF Corporation, DTE Energy, Landmark Engineers Inc., International Wildlife Refuge Alliance, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Sea Grant, and Wildlife Habitat Council.

The Detroit River has the distinction of being the only International Wildlife Refuge in North America and the only river system in North America to hold both American and Canadian Heritage River designations. This project is being undertaken in direct response to the sturgeon spawning habitat restoration objective in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

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