



phone: 519-973-1116

fax: 519-973-8360

CITIZENS ENVIRONMENT ALLIANCE
of southwestern Ontario

December 21, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Federal and Provincial Governments Should Create a Registry
of Canadian Lands for the Detroit River International Wildlife
Refuge**

WINDSOR, ONTARIO – Today marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Legislation creating the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge was signed into law by the President of the United States on December 21, 2001. The legislation was based upon a document titled “A Conservation Vision for the Lower Detroit River Ecosystem” signed by Canada and the United States earlier in 2001.

Since the establishment of the Refuge in 2001, U.S. agencies and partner organizations have expanded the Refuge on the U.S. side from 300 acres to over 5,700 acres. While the Refuge has grown substantially on the U.S. side of the Detroit River, Canada has failed to abide by the Conservation Vision that it endorsed for the Refuge ten years ago.

“After ten years, it is shameful that Canada is not living up to the spirit and intent of the Conservation Vision and failing to build North America’s only international wildlife refuge,” stated Derek Coronado, Coordinator of the Citizens Environment Alliance. “Canada needs to immediately establish a registry of lands, similar to what has been accomplished in the U.S. for the Refuge,” said Coronado.

In order to be consistent with the Conservation Vision endorsed by Canada in 2001, public and private partners could voluntarily add lands in Canada to a Canadian registry. Cooperative agreements or other mechanisms could be used to obtain voluntary commitments for collaborative management of lands in the spirit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

For more information, contact:

Derek Coronado, Coordinator, Citizens Environment Alliance 519-973-1116

The Citizens Environment Alliance (CEA) is a non-profit, grass-roots, international, education and research organization. We are committed to an ecosystem approach to environmental planning and management.

Backgrounder

In 2000, Canadian Deputy Prime Minister Herb Grey and U.S. Congressman John Dingell challenged a group of scientists and managers to define a desired future state for the Detroit River ecosystem. The resulting workshop produced a document titled “A Conservation Vision for the Lower Detroit River Ecosystem” signed on behalf of Canada by Canadian Deputy Prime Minister Herb Grey and Canadian Member of Parliament Susan Whelan, and on behalf of the United States by U.S. Congressman John Dingell and Peter Stroh, then Chairman of the Greater Detroit American Heritage River Initiative. All U.S. and Canadian participants in that multi-stakeholder exercise agreed in 2001 to the following vision statement:

In ten years the lower Detroit River ecosystem will be an international conservation region where the health and diversity of wildlife and fish are sustained through protection of existing significant habitats and rehabilitation of degraded ones, and where the resulting ecological, recreational, economic, educational, and “quality of life” benefits are sustained for present and future generations.

This consensus was then used by Congressman Dingell to introduce U.S. legislation creating the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge that was signed into law by the President of the United States on December 21, 2001. All relevant U.S. and Canadian agencies agreed with the concept of the international wildlife refuge and pledged to work collaboratively to achieve the conservation vision.

Since 2001, much has been accomplished binationally, including building a sturgeon spawning reef off Fighting Island, creating a Canada-U.S. bird driving tour called ByWays to FlyWays, convening biennial State of the Strait Conferences, collaborating on common tern research, and promoting soft shoreline engineering at 42 locations along the river in the watershed. In addition, since the establishment of the Refuge in 2001, U.S.

agencies and partner organizations have expanded the Refuge on the U.S. side from 300 to over 5,700 acres.

However, there has been no progress made on the Canadian side to build the international wildlife refuge.

Recommendation: the establishment of a registry of Canadian lands, similar to what has been accomplished on the U.S. side, for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge consistent with the Conservation Vision endorsed by Canada in 2001. Public and private partners would voluntarily add lands in Canada to this Canadian registry in the spirit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Cooperative agreements or other mechanisms could be used to obtain voluntary commitments for collaborative management of lands in the spirit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

North America's only international wildlife refuge provides a unique opportunity for the region of southwestern Ontario and southeast Michigan to help protect our natural capital and environment, sustain our economy, sustain our quality of life, and enhance community pride.