

November 12, 2010
Belle Isle Habitat Projects
Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Funding

A recent announcement by the Great Lakes National Program Office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) revealed that two projects proposed on Belle Isle by the Friends of the Detroit River (FDR) has been funded as the best opportunity for fish and wildlife restoration in the Detroit River Area of Concern. “The Friends of the Detroit River welcomes the opportunity to improve fish and wildlife habitat on the Detroit River with the implementation of these EPA grants,” said David Howell, Chairman of FDR. “We look forward to working together with our partners, the City of Detroit, in making a real difference on our river, and continuing the work of restoring our Great Lakes.”

These new projects represent a continuation of two restoration projects at Belle Isle Park implemented by the City of Detroit in 2003. One project restored a natural area on the banks of Blue Heron Lagoon and the second created a sturgeon spawning reef in the waters just off the island. Both projects were important components of the City of Detroit’s Belle Isle Master Plan.

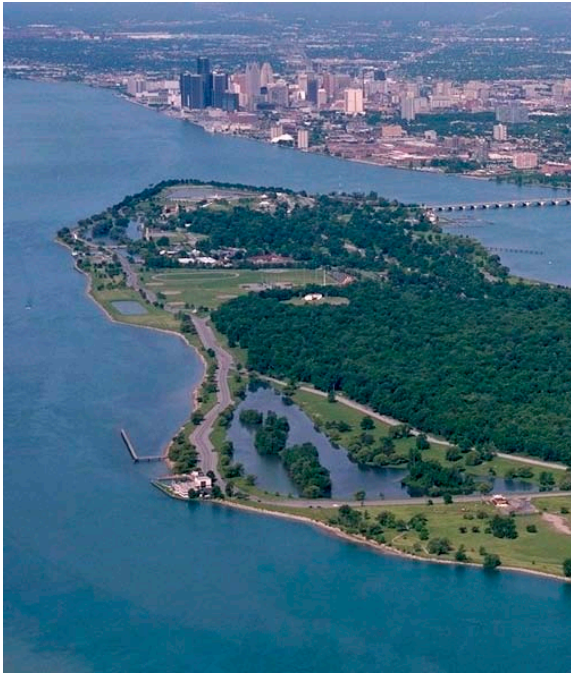
BLUE HERON LAGOON, BELLE ISLE PARK, DETROIT

The Blue Heron Lagoon is a 41-acre lake/wetland on the east end of Belle Isle that discharges to the Detroit River. Direct access for fish from the River to the Lagoon is prohibited by sheet pile walls, grates and drop structures. This project proposes to reconnect and naturalize the mouth of the Lagoon to the Detroit River restoring fish access to 41 acres of wetlands, shallow and deep water habitats. Enhancement of Blue Heron Lagoon will provide critical wildlife and fish nursery habitat that is severely limited along the Detroit River.



SOUTH FISHING PIER, BELLE ISLE PARK, DETROIT

The Detroit River's ecological quality has been diminished over time in part because of the loss of fish and wildlife habitat. Addressing this loss started with the construction of the Belle Isle Sturgeon Spawning Reef in the Detroit River near Belle Isle. The newly constructed reef has been the site of reproduction for 16 species of native where spawning was nonexistent. However, the fate of the fish larvae is largely unknown as little nursery habitat exists along the urban center. This project will create 2.5 acres of protected coastal wetland and shallow water nursery habitats immediately downstream from the spawning reef providing a critical refuge for the fish larvae to grow.



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