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Case Study and photos at iaglr.org/aoc/river-raisin/

A great success story: River Raisin cleanup helps Monroe, Michigan, realize economic, environmental benefits

ANN ARBOR, MI — Substantial cleanup of the River Raisin in southeast Michigan is helping to revitalize the City of Monroe, with the area seeing both environmental and economic benefits. That's the conclusion of a case study released today by the International Association for Great Lakes Research (IAGLR).

Bald eagles have returned to the River Raisin watershed, and both new and long-absent fish species appear in the river. Businesses and restaurants in downtown Monroe are embracing the revitalized river, with new outdoor patios and improved building exteriors creating a riverfront sense of place. The river's identity is also at the core of new recreational and historical initiatives, with people enjoying new gathering places and trails along the river banks.

Designated a Great Lakes Area of Concern (AOC) in 1985 mainly due to contaminated sediments and health advisories on fish consumption, the river has since been the target of restoration efforts under the River Raisin Remedial Action Plan (RAP). All cleanup and restoration work called for in the RAP have been completed. Efforts include significant upgrades to the Monroe Metropolitan Wastewater Treatment Plant (US\$45 million), contaminated sediment remediation (US\$43.1 million), and habitat restoration and dam removal (nearly US\$7 million) to open the river to an additional 23 miles (37 kilometers) for Great Lakes fish migration and spawning.

"This case study shows how public-private collaboration can yield substantial environmental results that lead to community revitalization," notes IAGLR Great Lakes Science-Policy Advisor John Hartig, an author of the case study. "Such environmental and economic results provide compelling rationale to sustain cleanup efforts targeted at Areas of Concern and the entire Great Lakes."

Restoration of the River Raisin is part of an integrated approach undertaken by the City of Monroe to protect the environment, celebrate history, enhance the community, and further the economy. "We are redefining Monroe from a Rust Belt city with a polluted river to a desirable urban community with outstanding natural resources,

significant historical assets, and a growing, diverse economy," says Assistant to the City Manager & Economic Development Coordinator Mark Cochran.

Both the city's master plan and a *Heritage Master Plan* developed by the city and the National Park Service view a restored River Raisin as an integral part of a vibrant community with a sustainable economy. These plans work synergistically to better connect Monroe residents and visitors with historical sites like the River Raisin National Battlefield Park; ecological sites like the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, Sterling State Park, and other waterfront parks; and business and cultural destinations.

Annual attendance at the battlefield park has steadily increased from 36,206 people in 2011 to 238,813 in 2017. Park attendance is projected to eventually reach approximately 635,000 annually, with an annual state and local economic impact projected at \$31.6 million and \$21.9 million, respectively, according to a study commissioned by the National Park Service. Such economic data, along with environmental and ecological data, demonstrate the importance of sustaining efforts to clean up Great Lakes AOCs.

The River Raisin case study is part of a larger project to evaluate achievements and lessons learned from 32 years of efforts to clean up Great Lakes AOCs. Available online at iaglr.org/aoc/river-raisin/ this first case study will become part of a user-friendly publication prepared for a broad range of stakeholders to help sustain support for cleaning up AOCs and to inspire and motivate others to restore other degraded aquatic ecosystems.

Funding was provided by the Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation to IAGLR, which administers and oversees the project. The Erb Foundation is a philanthropic organization that nurtures environmentally healthy and culturally vibrant communities in metro Detroit and supports initiatives to restore the Great Lakes ecosystem.

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The International Association for Great Lakes Research is a scientific organization made up of researchers studying the Laurentian Great Lakes, other large lakes of the world, and their watersheds, as well as those with an interest in such research. With its mission to promote all aspects of large lakes research and communicate research findings, IAGLR is uniquely positioned to foster the connection between science and policy, a connection vital for effective management and protection of the world's large lakes.