

**Detroit River Canadian Cleanup**  
311-360 Fairview Avenue W. Essex, Ontario ~ N8M 1Y6 ~ 519-982-3722  
postmaster@detroitriver.ca ~ www.detroitriver.ca

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# ANNUAL REVIEW 2009-2010



# Member Organizations



...and many dedicated citizens!

# Restoring our River, together!

The Detroit River Canadian Cleanup (DRCC) is a community-based partnership launched in 1998 to cleanup, enhance, restore and sustain the Detroit River ecosystem.

Partnerships within the DRCC aim to promote and implement the cleanup plan called a Remedial Action Plan to restore the Detroit River's beneficial uses with the ultimate goal of removing the Detroit River from the list of Great Lakes Areas of Concern.

The DRCC's members provide leadership in identifying partnerships and funding opportunities to support and complete cleanup goals for the Detroit River.

*This document reports on accomplishments on the Canadian side of the Detroit River between April 2009 and March 2010.*

Front cover: View of the Detroit River from Peche Island by Glen Garant, 2009.

# Areas of Concern in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin

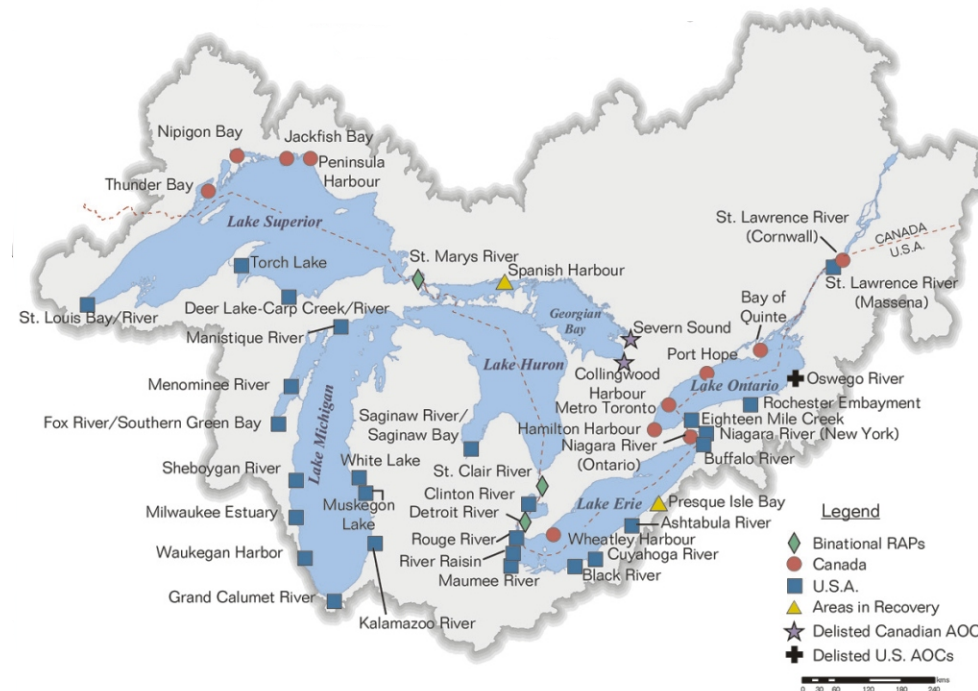


Photo credit: Environment Canada

An Area of Concern is a location in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin that has been identified as severely polluted or degraded



# Detroit River Canadian Public Advisory Council

The Detroit River Canadian Public Advisory Council (PAC) is a group of citizen volunteers and representatives from non-government organizations that are interested and dedicated to improving the health of the Detroit River ecosystem. The PAC is an important part of the Detroit River’s cleanup process as it is the route through which the public can provide input on the restoration, protection, and improvement of the Detroit River AOC.

The PAC has several roles and responsibilities including promoting community involvement, critically reviewing DRCC reports, lobbying politicians on Detroit River issues, and serving as the public’s voice on DRCC Committees. In 2009-2010, the PAC completed the following:

- Began lobbying for the protection and restoration of the Ojibway Shores property—the last remaining section of unaltered shoreline on the Canadian side of the Detroit River;
- Assisted in organizing and implementing several Outreach events;
- Provided comments on the draft Remedial Action Plan Stage 2 Report;
- Wrote letters of support for the City of Windsor’s Riverfront Retention Treatment Basin;
- Represented the Canadian voice of the Detroit River during Detroit River U.S. PAC meetings;
- Reviewed and commented on the re-negotiation of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

## Acronyms

AOC	Area of Concern	ERCA	Essex Region Conservation Authority
BCS	Biodiversity Conservation Strategy	MOE	Ministry of the Environment
DRCC	Detroit River Canadian Cleanup	NPS	Non-Point Source
EC	Environment Canada	RAP	Remedial Action Plan
ECSN	Essex County Stewardship Network	RTB	Retention Treatment Basin

# Message from the Coordinator

Thank you for another wonderful year! The Detroit River Canadian Cleanup’s member organizations and dedicated citizens continue to work together to restore, enhance, and protect the Detroit River ecosystem. It is only by working together that we will be able to achieve a better Detroit River for us all.

In 2009-2010, several projects commenced that will improve the Detroit River. The construction of a retention treatment basin will collect and treat water from combined sewers before entering the River—improving water quality; shoreline habitat restoration will provide necessary rearing habitat for young, growing fishes such as walleye and lake sturgeon; and, education and public involvement initiatives continue to provide important information about the Detroit River and promote environmental stewardship in youth and adults alike.

There are so many small actions that can have a big impact on the Detroit River (e.g., disconnect your downspout and install a rain barrel, use fertilizers sparingly, use native plant species in your home garden, never dispose of medications or chemicals in the drains, etc.).

When we take the time to think about our actions and their impact, we begin to appreciate what is around us and we realize that it is worth protecting.

*It’s time to stop. It’s time to think. It’s time to ask questions. It’s time to make a difference. Together. Keep up the great work!*



Natalie Green  
Remedial Action Plan Coordinator

## Education & Public Involvement



Over \$30,000 of funding, generously provided by the Ministry of the Environment (COA) and Environment Canada, was allocated for Detroit River Education and Outreach Projects. Please read below for more information.

### *Waterlife* Movie Screening

Did you know that the Great Lakes provide the Earth with 20% of its surface fresh water? Over 35 million people who live in the Great Lakes Basin are lucky to have access to such a precious resource and rely on it for survival; however, humans have subjected the Great Lakes to years of pollution and degradation. *Waterlife* is a documentary about the state of the Great Lakes and follows its water on its journey from northern Lake Superior to the Atlantic Ocean.

The DRCC kicked off the release of its draft Remedial Action Plan Stage 2 Report with a special screening of *Waterlife* at SilverCity Windsor on September 23, 2009. Over 240 people attended the event to learn about the issues affecting the Great Lakes. After the film, attendees had the opportunity to speak to DRCC representatives and the RAP Coordinator.



## Monitoring & Research



### Black-Crowned Night Heron Study

The Canadian Wildlife Service, in partnership with the Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research, Environment Canada, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, began this study in 2009 to assess the reproductive viability of the black-crowned night heron, an indicator of environmental contaminant conditions that is known to nest in the Detroit River and reference (non-AOC) areas. The information collected from this study is critical for the DRCC to assess the status of 'Bird and Animal Deformities or Other Reproductive Problems' in the Detroit River AOC. Funding support for this study was provided by Environment Canada and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment.



### Detroit River Angler and Aesthetics Survey

A survey has been developed by the DRCC to obtain input from the local community on the flavour of fish from the Detroit River as well as the river's aesthetics. The survey was released to Detroit River anglers and other Detroit River-users beginning in the spring of 2010. The DRCC will utilize the information collected from the survey to re-assess the status of two Detroit River beneficial uses: fish and wildlife flavour and aesthetics.

educate landowners regarding the benefits of water quality enhancement and habitat restoration projects. With all funding partners considered, over \$400,000 worth of projects were completed in the Detroit River watershed.

## LaSalle Riverfront Park Shoreline Habitat Restoration

The Great Lakes Sustainability Fund provided \$155,000 of financial support to the Essex Region Conservation Authority to rehabilitate approximately 550 metres of Detroit River shoreline in the Town of LaSalle, next to Gil Maure Park. Funding was also provided by MOE (\$50,000) and DRCC (\$25,000). The site is located immediately downstream of the successful Fighting Island Fish Spawning Habitat Project completed in the fall 2008. The pre-existing shoreline at this site consisted of vertical sheet steel walls and many abandoned finger docks. The completed works feature an undulating shoreline incorporating a variety of rock types and sizes, as well as a large offshore sheltering island. These features will improve habitat for many of the over 60 fish species that are found in the Detroit River. The project is part of the establishment of a new riverfront park that will provide enhanced access to the Detroit River for residents and visitors. In addition to the shoreline habitat restoration, the site will include a launch point for canoes, improved access for anglers, and a new LaSalle Environmental Research Centre (a partnership of the Town of LaSalle and the University of Windsor).



Before



After



Sheltering Island

## Pêche Island Day 2009

Pêche Island Day is an annual event hosted by several of the DRCC’s member organizations to celebrate Pêche Island’s history and ecology as part of the Detroit River. It’s also an opportunity for people to visit the Island which is only accessible by boat.

In September 2009, over 300 people boarded a boat or paddled the Montreal canoe across the Detroit River to visit this beautiful island park owned and maintained by the City of Windsor. While waiting at Lakeview Park Marina to board their boat, some visitors even had the opportunity to see a Sharp-shinned Hawk up close! Once on the island, visitors were able to join a guided tour of the island or explore it on their own. Some used the opportunity to meet up with friends and family to enjoy a picnic lunch and take photos.



Paddling to Pêche Island

View from the island

Sharp-shinned Hawk

Special thanks are owed to the following organizations for their important role making Pêche Island Day 2009 so successful: BASF Inc., Citizens Environment Alliance, City of Windsor, Essex County Field Naturalists’ Club, Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research (University of Windsor), Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and the Windsor-Essex County Canoe Club.

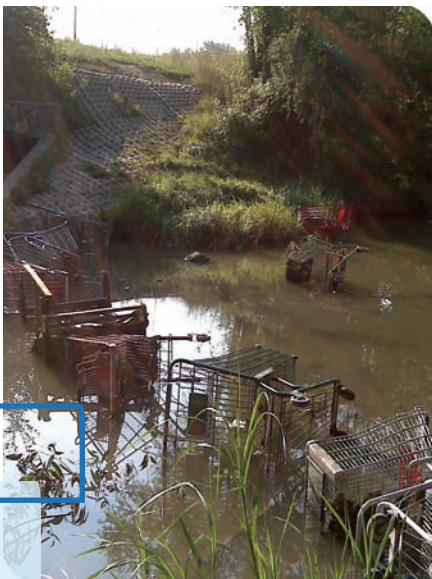


# Dive into our Area of Concern: Detroit River Information Session

An interesting, thought-provoking information session about issues and research in the Detroit River Area of Concern was co-hosted with the Local Council of Women and the DRCC on September 28, 2009. This event attracted nearly 20 people to the Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research to attend the seminar.

## Draft Detroit River Canadian Remedial Action Plan Stage 2 Report: Open Houses

In October 2009, the DRCC hosted three open houses in each of the municipalities adjacent to the Detroit River (Amherstburg, LaSalle, and Windsor) to allow citizens to learn and ask questions about the Detroit River Area of Concern and the Remedial Action Plan. In total, 25 people attended the Open Houses.



Crystal Bay & Little River Cleanups



# Habitat & Non-Point Source Remediation



## Detroit River-Canard River Corridor Stewardship Initiative Program

The Detroit River-Canard River Corridor Stewardship Initiative engages private landowners and other agencies to increase natural habitat linkages and to enhance fish and wildlife habitat in Essex County (including the Detroit River watershed). The program strives to create new habitat and to reduce habitat fragmentation in the Detroit River-Canard River Corridor.

In 2009-2010, the Essex County Stewardship Network (with funding from Environment Canada's Great Lakes Sustainability Fund and other partners) created:

- 6 ha of wetland habitat,
- 16.75 km of riparian habitat,
- 5 ha of prairie/meadow habitat,
- 5 ha of reforestation.

## Rural Non-Point Source (NPS) Remediation & Habitat Restoration Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS) Programs

The Rural NPS and BCS Programs are each administered in the Detroit River watershed by ERCA with funding from Environment Canada (Great Lakes Sustainability Fund), ERCA's Clean Water~Green Spaces Program and landowners. Between April 2009 and March 2010, 18 NPS projects were completed including buffer strips, rock chutes, fragile land retirement (tree planting), and septic system upgrades. In addition, over 35 acres of habitat restoration, including tree planting, was undertaken at an additional eight sites. Landowner workshops were held to



The RTB includes a holding tank and treatment facility for combined sewer overflows during heavy storms. The excess water will be collected in the tank to be treated before being released to the Detroit River. After the storm event, the basin will be flushed to the existing sewer which leads to the Lou Romano Water Reclamation Plant.

The basin will be located (underground) between Glengarry and Aylmer Avenue.

The \$60 million cost of the RTB is being shared by the Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario and the City of Windsor. The project is due to be completed by the spring 2011.



Construction of the RTB - Feb. 2010

## Community Cleanups

On April 18, 2009, the Detroit River Canadian Cleanup partnered with the Windsor Skin and Scuba Club (with Project AWARE) and the Essex Region Conservation Authority for an underwater and shoreline cleanup at Crystal Bay Conservation Area. Beautiful weather and many volunteers contributed to a very successful event.

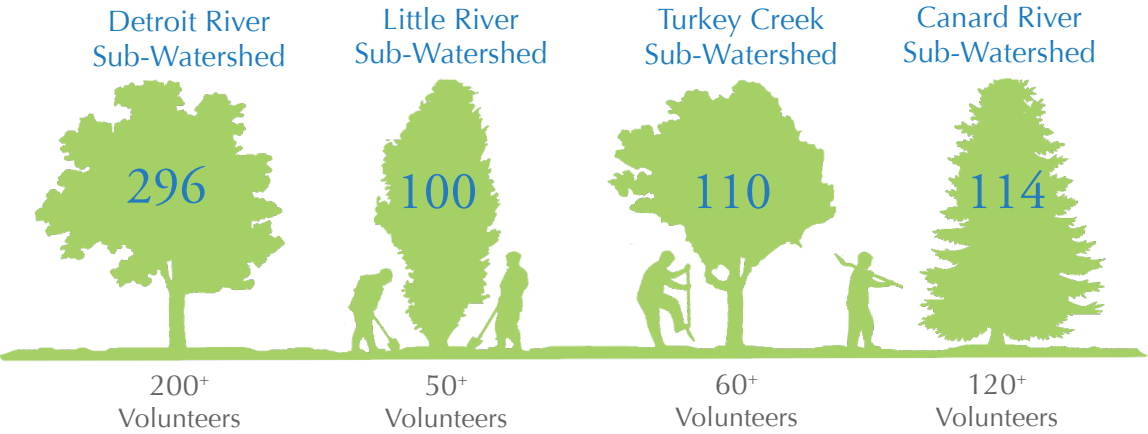


Thanks to help from 76 volunteer participants the group collected approximately 600 lbs. of garbage including a barrel, a BBQ grill, a chair, a rug, broken bottles, and other debris. Volunteers were provided with a boat ride to and from the island and a delicious BBQ lunch.

On September 26, 2009, over 15 University of Windsor students participated in a cleanup of a section of Little River. With support from the DRCC, the CAW Computers for Kids, and the Friends of Watersheds Organizer, the student volunteers removed a shopping cart, tires, patio chairs, and a lot of other debris from a section of Little River.

# Tree Plantings

Community and school tree plantings are coordinated by ERCA's Friends of Watersheds program and the Little River Enhancement Group Committee. The DRCC (with funding from Environment Canada) supported numerous community/school planting events in the Detroit River watershed (including Little River, Turkey Creek, and Canard River). Between April 2009 and March 2010, 620 native trees/shrubs and 36 wildflowers were planted in the Detroit River watershed! These tree plantings are important to the biodiversity and quality of the Detroit River watersheds and also for promoting environmental stewardship in youth and the community!



## Upcoming Projects

The DRCC Outreach Committee and Public Advisory Council are working together to develop some great upcoming education projects including:

- Interpretive signage for Detroit River Bald Eagles
- A tap water campaign (Do you know your H<sub>2</sub>O?)
- Pêche Island information brochure
- Watershed tour brochures
- Student video contest about Detroit River issues

# Water Quality Improvements

## Retention Treatment Basin Project

The Retention Treatment Basin (RTB) Project involves the installation of a new interceptor sewer and the construction of a large underground tank designed to reduce the amount of untreated water entering the Detroit River from combined sewer overflows. Construction of the \$60 million project along Windsor's riverfront began in January 2010. The RTB project is expected to improve the Detroit River's water quality by reducing the number of untreated sewer overflow into the river.

As is typical in many older cities, some areas of the City of Windsor are serviced by a combined sewer system, a collection system that conveys a mixture of wastewater and storm water through a single pipe to a treatment plant. During some big storms, the capacity of the combined sewer is exceeded, and as a result, excess untreated water is discharged directly to the Detroit River—called a combined sewer overflow.

