

Restoring Our River Together!

Binational Habitat Restoration Efforts to Improve the Detroit River



Stony & Celeron Islands Habitat Restoration

A total of 7,900 linear feet (2,410 m) of rock shoal was built surrounding Stony and Celeron Islands. These restored shoals themselves support vegetation and provide habitat for birds, amphibians, and reptiles, while protecting and promoting growth of over 100 acres (40 ha) of backwater habitat - a calm, vegetated water zone suitable for fish spawning and nursery activity.



Lake Okonoka Restoration

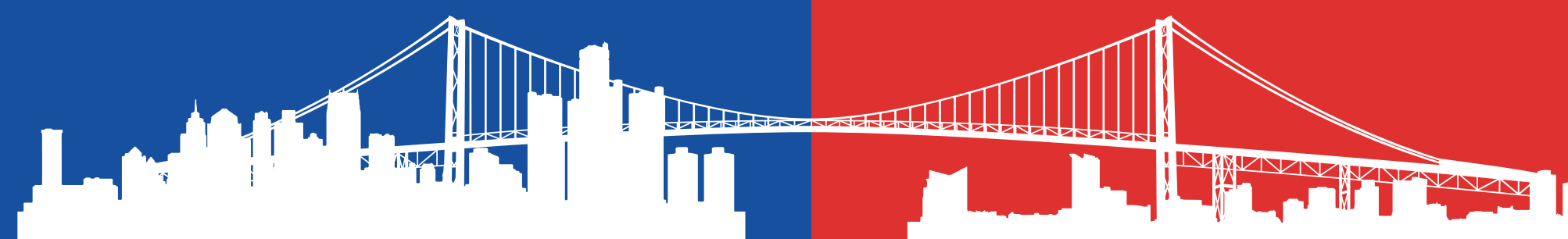
Making Lake Okonoka more connected and accessible to spawning fish is one major step in improving fish habitat at Belle Isle. The lake is now linked to Blue Heron Lagoon on one end and the Detroit River on the other, allowing Great Lakes water and fish to pass between the bodies of water. Lake Okonoka will become a high-quality haven for young fish to find shelter until they're large enough to survive in the Detroit River.



Milliken State Park Habitat Restoration

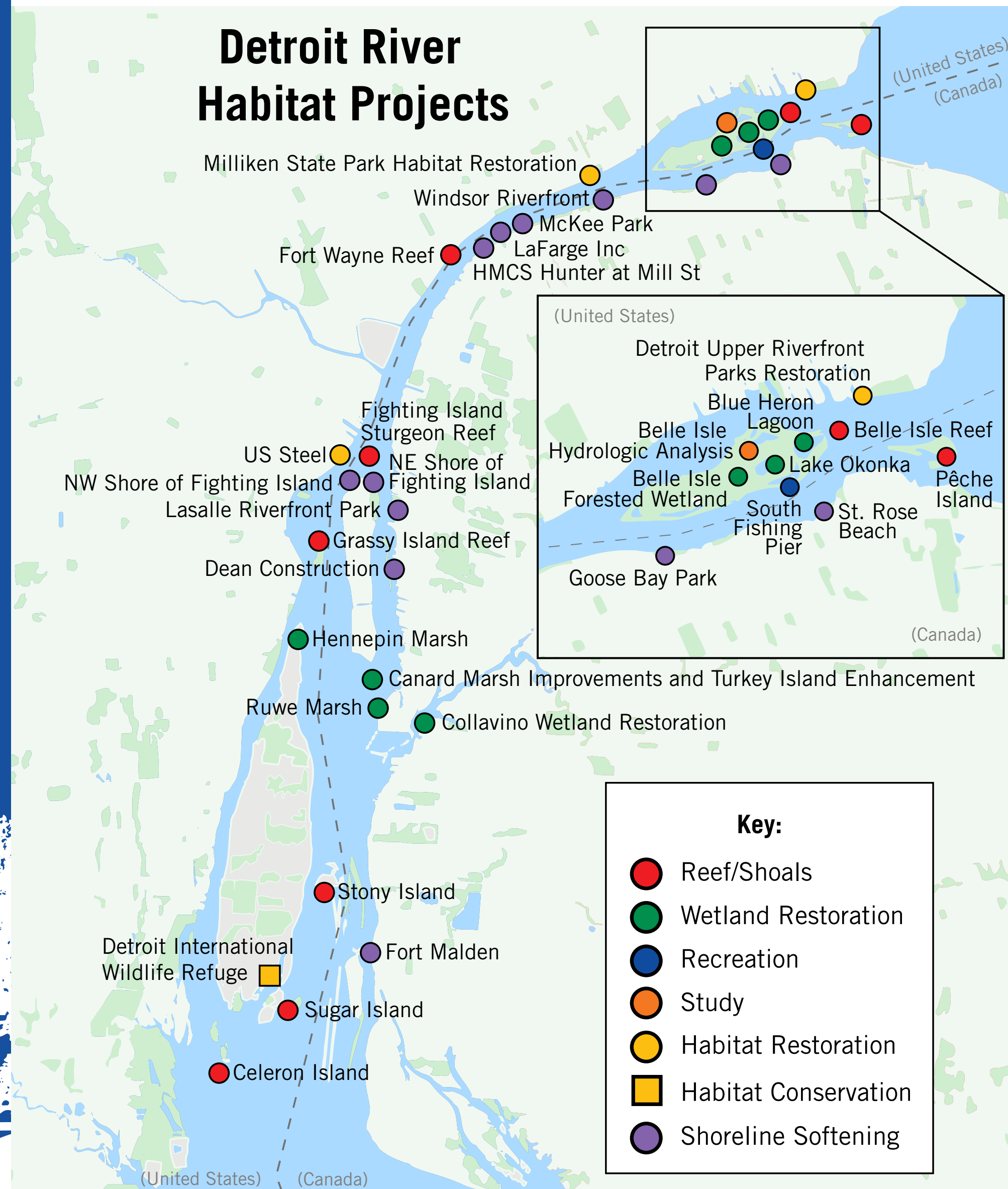
Native habitats on nearly an acre (0.4 ha) of property at Milliken State Park was restored by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Milliken State Park is located in downtown Detroit, directly across from the Outdoor Adventure Center. The property, previously consisting of a lawn filled with invasive species, was restored to a wet meadow and prairie complex.

As the project site is very visible to the public, the restored ecosystem was designed to be both functional and beautiful. Showy wildflower species native to the region will bloom throughout the season while also providing nectar for visiting pollinators such as the monarch butterfly. The habitat design also considered birds, reptiles, and amphibians.



The Detroit River is a 28 mi (51 km) long channel that connects Lake St. Clair to Lake Erie. In 1987, it was identified as one of five binational Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOC) due to pollution and habitat loss. Partners in both Canada and the United States are working to restore habitat by softening and planting the shoreline, constructing fish spawning reefs and rocky shoals, and restoring and constructing wetlands.

Because of these efforts, we again have a diversity of fish and wildlife species, including spawning lake sturgeon and reproducing bald eagles throughout the river.



Shoreline Softening

Approximately 39% of the Canadian shoreline is classified as 'hard', which is considered unsuitable habitat for many desirable species. Through the Remedial Action Plan (RAP), an effort has been made to soften hard shoreline, and to date, the RAP (CAN) partners have completed 13 shoreline softening projects on the Detroit River.



Wetland Restoration

In 2019, a 75 acre (30 ha) coastal wetland at the mouth of the Canard River was restored. The restoration involved installing pumping infrastructure so that the water level in the wetland can be controlled to encourage the growth of native vegetation and improve habitat for wildlife.



Reefs and Shoals

RAP partners have constructed rocky shoals at several sites along the river. These shoals create calm water areas and provide living space for aquatic invertebrates (bugs) that in turn provide food for fish. To date, we have constructed shoals at 8 shoreline softening projects. The largest habitat project on the Canadian side of the river, which includes 9 shoals, is planned for construction near Peche Island in 2020.

Canadian and American partners also collaborated on the construction of a sturgeon spawning reef on the NE tip of Fighting Island. A total of 2.1 acres (0.85 ha) of aquatic, deep water habitat was constructed.

