

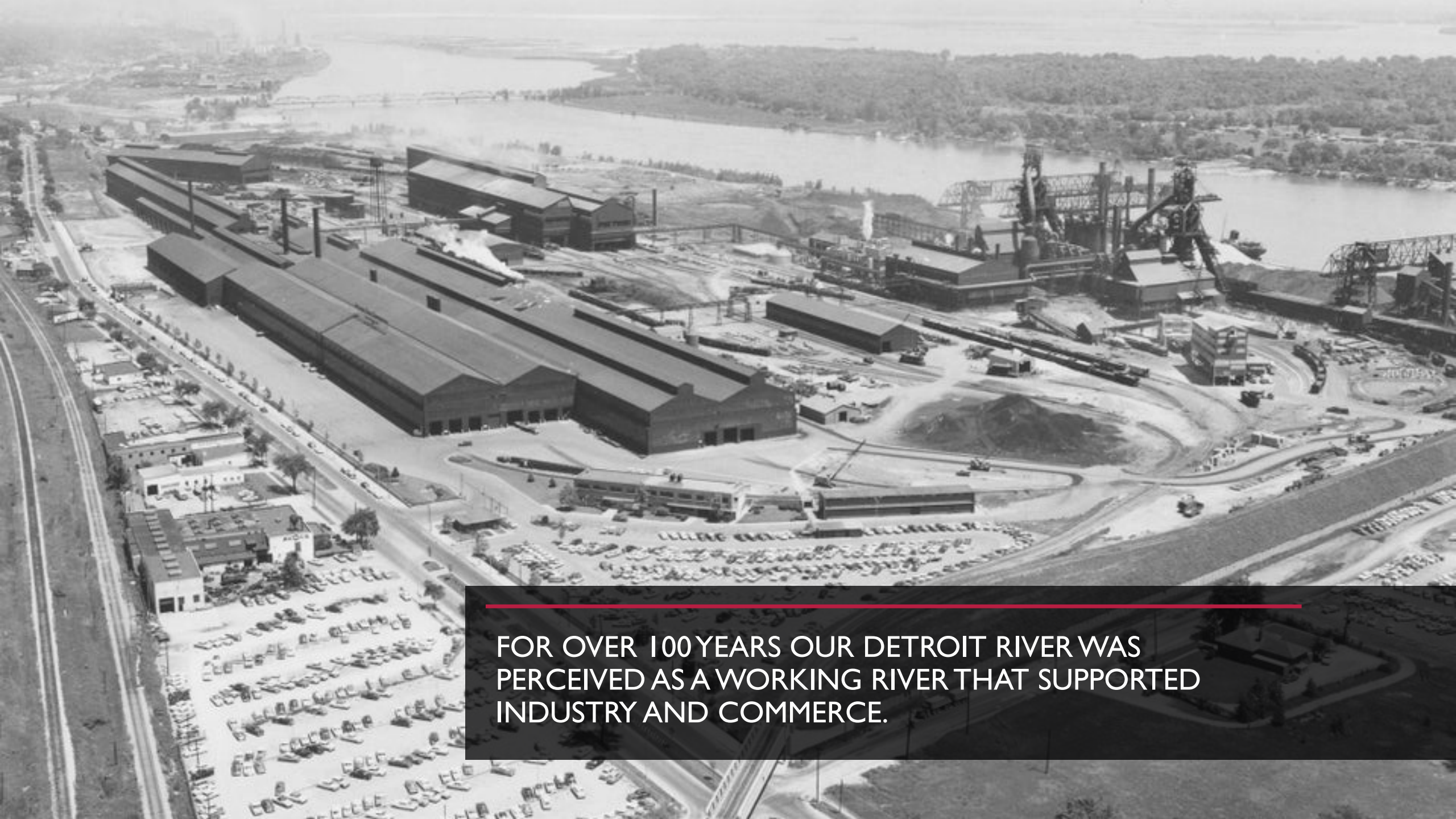
# JOHN HARTIG

GREAT LAKES SCIENCE-  
POLICY ADVISOR,  
INTERNATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION FOR GREAT  
LAKES RESEARCH

VISITING SCHOLAR, GREAT  
LAKES INSTITUTE FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH,  
UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR







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FOR OVER 100 YEARS OUR DETROIT RIVER WAS  
PERCEIVED AS A WORKING RIVER THAT SUPPORTED  
INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE.



WATER POLLUTION WAS JUST PART OF THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS.



**IN THE 1960s,  
FEDERAL WATER  
POLLUTION  
CONTROL  
ADMINISTRATION  
IDENTIFIED THE  
DETROIT RIVER AS  
ONE OF THE MOST  
POLLUTED RIVER  
IN THE U.S.**

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# WINTER DUCK KILLS DUE TO OIL POLLUTION

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- In 1960, 12,000 ducks and geese died from oil pollution
- In 1967, another 5,400 ducks and geese died from oil pollution



# DETROIT WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT

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In the 1960s, this plant was only achieving primary treatment (removal of material that would either float or settle out and disinfection) and Detroit's regional combined storm and sanitary sewer system was discharging over 31 billion gallons of untreated wastewater per year from combined sewer overflows







IN THE 1960s,  
REPRODUCTIVE FAILURE OF  
BALD EAGLES, PEREGRINE  
FALCONS, AND OSPREY WAS  
OCCURRING, DUE TO EGG  
SHELL THINNING FROM  
PESTICIDES LIKE DDT

Left: Normal Peregrine Egg; Right: DDT Exposed Egg



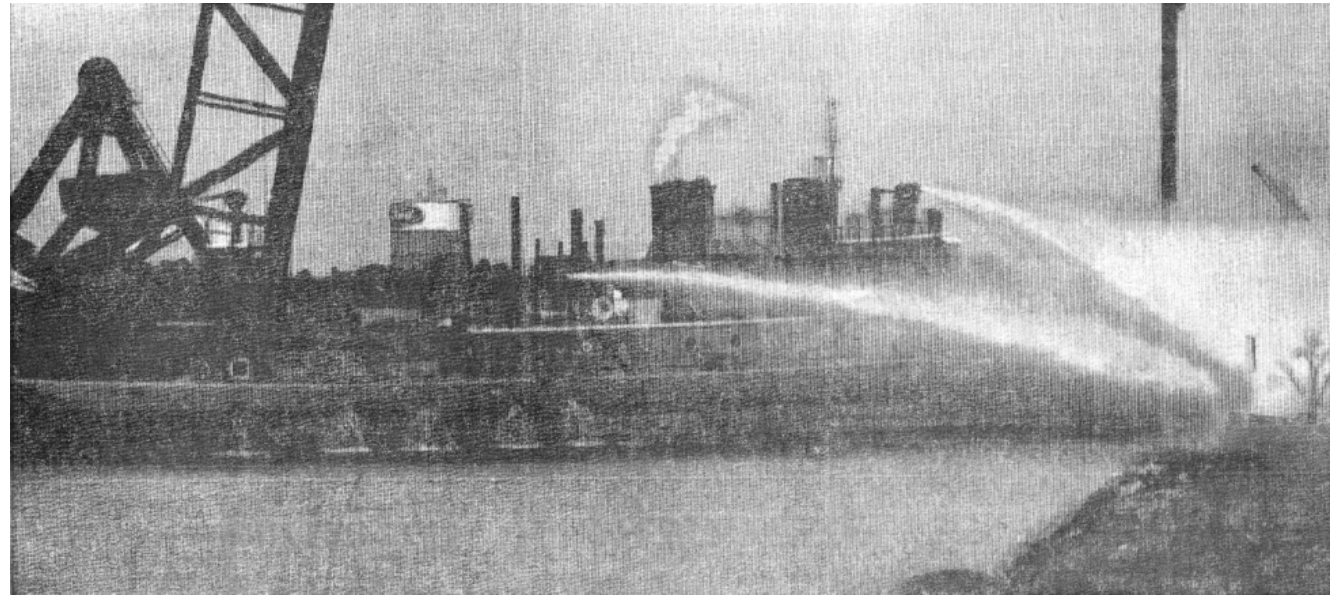
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**NO LAKE STURGEON OR LAKE WHITEFISH  
SPAWNING IN THE DETROIT RIVER**



**THEN ON  
OCTOBER 9, 1969  
THE LOWER  
ROUGE RIVER  
CAUGHT ON FIRE**

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**“WHEN YOU HAVE A RIVER THAT BURNS,  
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, YOU HAVE  
TROUBLES. IT HAPPENED ON  
CLEVELAND’S CUYAHOGA, AND NOW IT  
HAS HAPPENED ON THE ROUGE RIVER.”**

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**Detroit Free Press**

DETROIT FREE PRESS EDITORIAL

OCT. 12, 1969





**EARTH DAY 1970**

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## Public outcry over water pollution led to:

- The U.S. National Environmental Policy Act of 1970
- The Canada Water Act of 1970
- The U.S. Clean Water Act of 1972
- The U.S.-Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1972
- The U.S. Endangered Species Act of 1973



*THESE LAWS, IN TURN, PROVIDED THE FOUNDATION FOR CLEANUP OF THE DETROIT RIVER*



- Substantial reductions in oil discharges and spills have occurred, and winter duck kills due to oil pollution have been eliminated
- Billions of dollars have been spent on municipal wastewater treatment, achieving 2<sup>o</sup> treatment
- Greater than 90% decline in phosphorus concentration and loading from the Detroit WWTP
- Since 1960 there has been a more than 90% reduction in untreated CSO volume from communities in SE MI, but more is needed



- Between the 1960s and 1980s there was an over 4,000 tonnes/day decrease in chloride loadings to the Detroit River
- 80% decline in mercury in walleye (yet health advisories remain in effect on certain species and size classes)
- 88% decline in DDE and 90% decline in PCBs in herring gull eggs
- 293,000 m<sup>3</sup> of contaminated sediment remediated on the Detroit River, 397,000 m<sup>3</sup> on the Rouge River, and 168,000 m<sup>3</sup> on the River Raisin



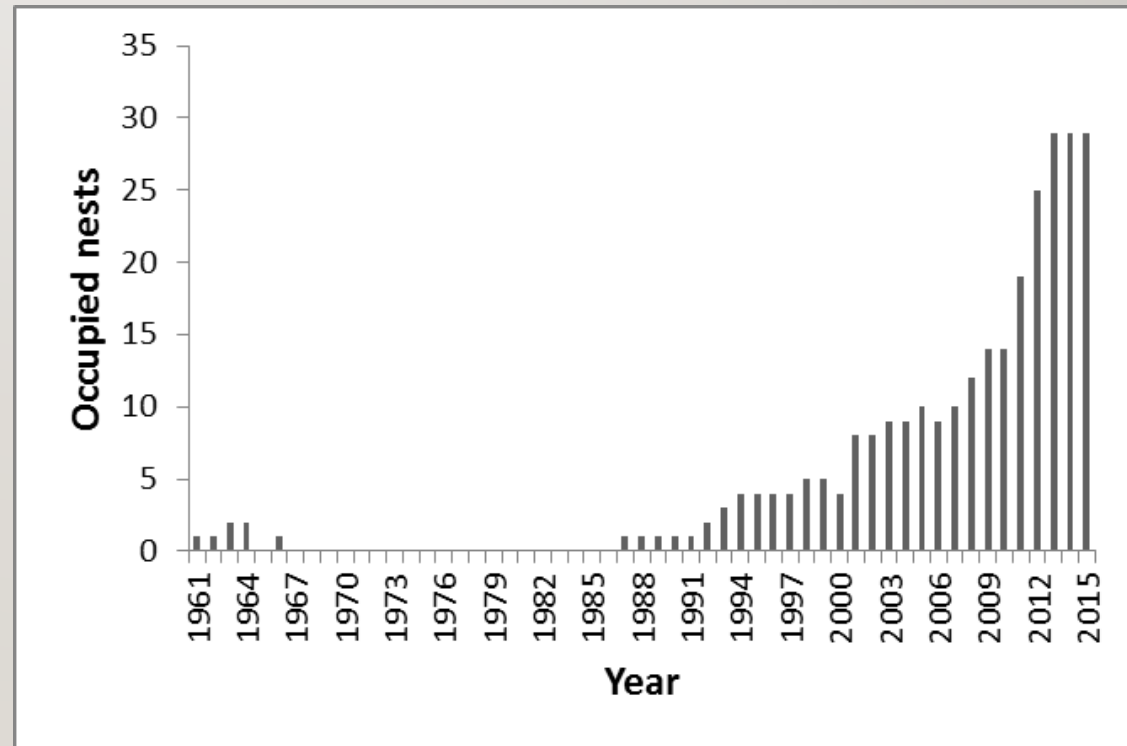


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***THESE ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPROVEMENTS ARE HEARTENING,  
BUT THAT IS NOT THE BEST PART  
OF THE STORY!***

# SURPRISING ECOLOGICAL RECOVERY

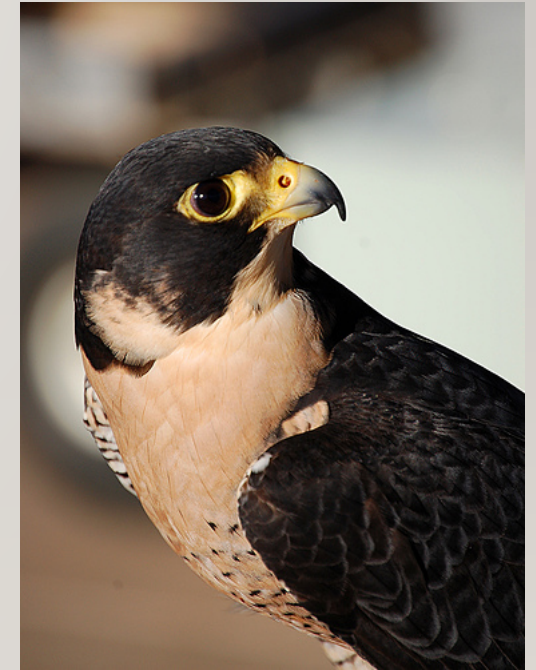
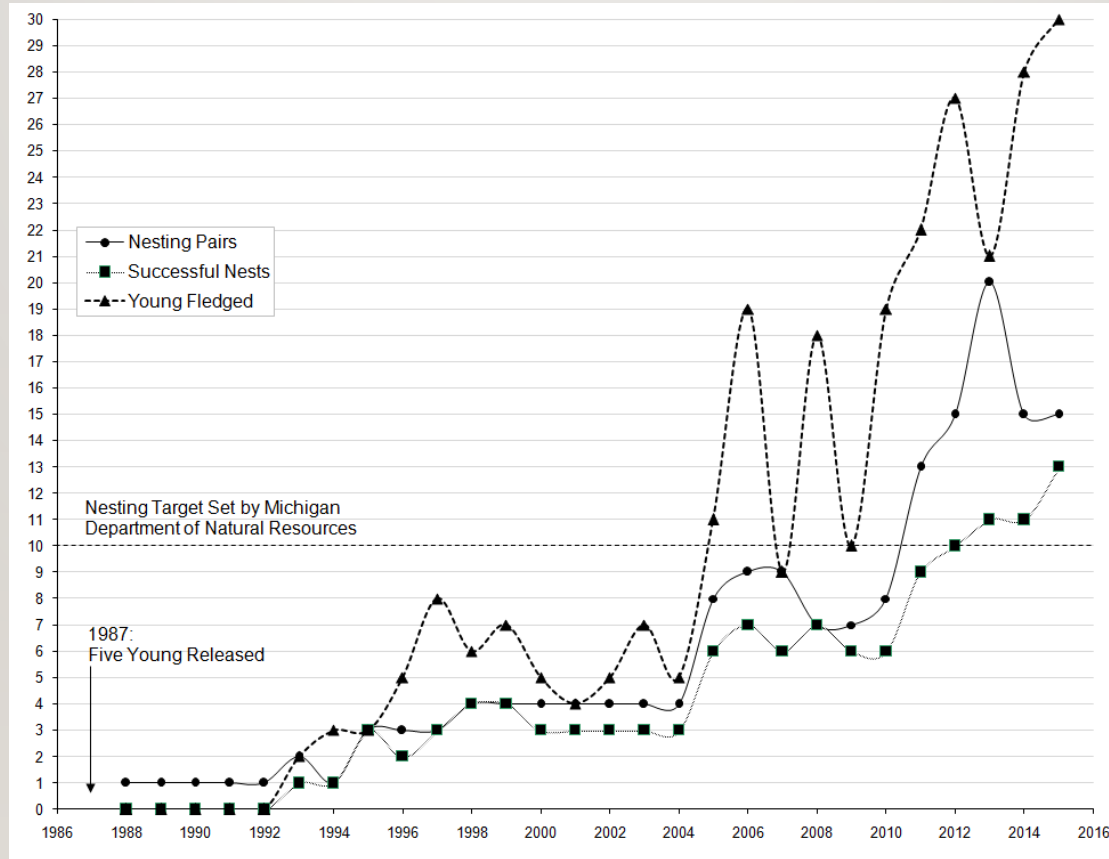
- The Bald Eagle population has recovered
- There are over 25 active nests in SE MI after a 20-year absence





# PEREGRINE FALCON RECOVERY

- Peregrines reintroduced in Detroit in 1987
- 20 or more young fledged in SE Michigan, 2011-2015





## RETURN OF OSPREY

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- **Osprey population rapidly declining in early-1960s**
- **By 1999 only one active nest in southern Michigan**
- **Osprey re-introduction starts in late-1990s**
- **50 nesting pairs in SE MI in 2016 and 52 in 2017**
- **Goal: 30 nesting pairs by 2020 in MI's Lower Peninsula**



# RETURN OF LAKE STURGEON

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- Substantial decline in sturgeon population between the late 1800s and early 1900s
- No sturgeon spawning recorded from 1970s to 1999
- Sturgeon reproduction first documented in 2001 (first time in 30 yr)



# RETURN OF LAKE WHITEFISH

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- Substantial decline in whitefish population between the late-1800s and early-1900s
- In 2006, whitefish spawning in the Detroit River was documented for the first time since 1916





# WALLEYE

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- In the 1970s, the walleye population was considered in “crisis”
- Lake Erie and Detroit River considered “Walleye Capital of the World”



# EVEN BEAVER HAVE RETURNED

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- Beaver were hunted to near extinction during the “fur trade era”
- During the height of oil pollution (1940s-1970s), beaver could not have survived
- In 2008, a pair of beaver built a lodge at DTE’s Conner Creek Power Plant
- In 2009, this pair produced at least two pups
- As of 2013, beaver have been reported from six locations in the watershed





# ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE ECOLOGICAL RECOVERY STORIES IN NORTH AMERICA!



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## ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCE CHALLENGES

**Population growth, transportation expansion, and land use changes**

**Habitat loss and degradation (only 3% of historical Detroit River wetlands remain – target is 25% by 2030)**

**Nonpoint source pollution (Wayne County has 38% impervious surface; Rouge River has 23% impervious surface – target is < 10%)**



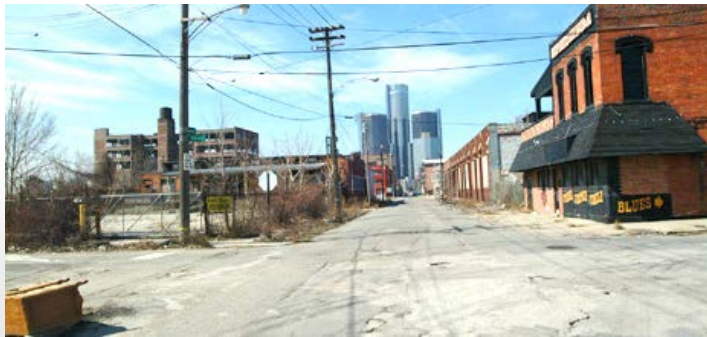
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ENVIRONMENTAL  
AND NATURAL  
RESOURCE  
CHALLENGES  
*CONTINUED*

Toxic substances contamination (over 5 million m<sup>3</sup> of contaminated sediment requires remediation on the Det. Riv.)

Introduction of exotic species (we are not doing enough to prevent the introduction)

Greenhouse gases and climate change (one of the greatest environmental challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century)



DETROIT  
MADE THE  
RIVER ITS  
BACKDOOR

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- For over a century, city planners identified the highest and best use of the waterfront was “industrial”
- Detroit was an industrial town and it had a working riverfront that supported industry and commerce
- And the Detroit River was a working river in the industrial heartland

- Fewer people and industries
- Much underutilized and undervalued riverfront land
- Out of the convergence of growing public and private support to gain access to the Detroit River, revival of the river, and new designations as American and Canadian Heritage Rivers came an opportunity to re-envision the downtown Detroit waterfront as a gathering place for both people and wildlife





# Detroit Riverfront Conservancy

- Established in 2003
- 501 c 3 organization
- Public-private partnership
- 44-member Board of Directors
- Vision: Transform Detroit's international riverfront - the face of the city - into a beautiful, exciting, safe, accessible world-class gathering place for all





A vibrant, high-angle photograph of a park. In the foreground, a gravel path winds through a lush garden filled with various plants, including bright orange and red flowers. To the left, a body of blue water is visible, with a white stone bridge featuring multiple arches in the background. The sky is a clear, bright blue with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is bright and inviting, showcasing a well-maintained public space.

**BEAUTIFUL, EXCITING, SAFE,  
ACCESSIBLE...**





**...WORLD-CLASS GATHERING  
PLACE...**





...FOR ALL!

I ❤️ Detroit  
#SummerOnTheD



# DETROIT RIVERWALK

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- \$110 million raised in the first 10 years
- In addition, \$40 million invested in an endowment to operate, care, maintain, program, and steward the Detroit RiverWalk







Before



After – Milliken State Park



Before



After – GM Plaza







Before



After – Cullen Plaza



Before



After – Milliken State Park







Before



After Stroh River Place



Before



After – Gabriel Richard Park





# ECONOMIC BENEFITS (CSL INTERNATIONAL, 2013)

<b>CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS</b>	
<b>Riverfront construction and land value</b>	\$1.548 billion
<b>Portion attributable to riverfront</b>	\$639 million
<b>Construction period jobs</b>	16,700
<b>ANNUAL IMPACTS</b>	
<b>Total annual spending by visitors, residents, and employees</b>	\$43.7 million
<b>Combined annual spending: 2003-2013</b>	\$360.6 million
<b>Annual positive media value</b>	\$600,000
<b>Annual jobs</b>	1,300
<b>Total annual tax revenue generation</b>	\$4.5 million

**TOTAL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN THE FIRST 10 YEARS - \$1 BILLION**

# DETROIT RIVERWALK

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- Nearly 80% complete (3.5 miles completed)
- Three million annual visitors
- One of the City's most attractive features
- Open every day, free, welcoming to all, and has become a major tourist attraction
- The Detroit RiverWalk is rapidly becoming the iconographic image of Detroit in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and a key supporting element in Detroit's revival







**AND IT JUST GETS BETTER!**





RALPH C. WILSON, JR. CENTENNIAL PARK – PROJECTED TO OPEN IN 2022 (\$50 MILLION GIFT FROM THE RW FOUNDATION; U.S. EPA IS PROVIDING \$2.5 MILLION FOR CONTAMINATED SEDIMENT REMEDIATION AND HABITAT RESTORATION

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A vibrant, sunny day on a boardwalk. In the foreground, a man in a black t-shirt and blue shorts walks towards the camera. Next to him, a woman in a floral top and green pants walks away. To the right, a woman in a colorful striped tank top pushes a green stroller with a young child inside. Beside her, a man in a maroon t-shirt with 'TUSKEGEE' printed on it and black shorts walks. Further right, a woman in a patterned top and blue shorts walks away. The background is filled with other pedestrians, a large white ship docked at a pier, and a suspension bridge in the distance. The word 'PROGRAMMING' is overlaid in large white letters across the center of the image.

# PROGRAMMING





# WALKS & RUNS





GM FOUNDATION  
GM FOUNDATION  
CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION  
AGENCY

# GM READING & RHYTHM ON THE RIVERFRONT

Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!

Wee Excel Summer Camp  
Where discoveries are made into memories

Wee Excel Summer Camp  
Where discoveries are made into memories

Wee Excel Summer Camp  
Where discoveries are made into memories





# FISHING FEST



# GM RIVER DAYS





An aerial photograph of a social event on a greenway. The scene is filled with people, some sitting on benches, others standing in groups. There are several blue tents and a large mural on a wall in the background. A blue scissor lift is parked near the mural. A white van and a black van are parked on the right. A paved path with a white line and a bicycle symbol runs through the scene, with several people riding bicycles. The overall atmosphere is lively and social.

# SOIREE ON THE GREENWAY





# YOGA ON THE RIVER





A group of people is practicing yoga on a bridge at night. They are holding glowing sticks that emit a rainbow of colors. The scene is illuminated by the bridge's lights and the city lights in the background. The text "MOONLIGHT YOGA" is overlaid in the center of the image.

# MOONLIGHT YOGA





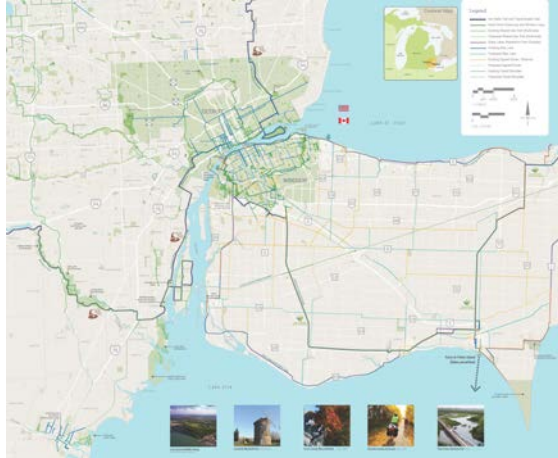
# SLOW ROLL ON THE CUT



# HARVESTFEST IN THE D







# U.S.-CANADA GREENWAYS VISION MAP – GORDIE HOWE BRIDGE TO OPEN IN 2024

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*Detroit was the epicenter of the Fur Trade Era, an unparalleled leader of ship building for 100 years, the “Silicon Valley” of the industrial age, and the unquestioned leader of the Arsenal of Democracy. Today, Detroit is once again demonstrating its creativity, innovation, and work ethic in building the Detroit RiverWalk, and leading the nation down a more sustainable path.*







If you are interested in getting involved in the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, visit: [detroitriverfront.org/waystohelp](https://detroitriverfront.org/waystohelp)



THANK YOU!

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