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\$12 Million Fish Passage Project Completed on Menominee River A Unique Collaboration Between Many Partners

Menominee, MI – For nearly a century, Lake Michigan’s sturgeon have been denied access to critical spawning and rearing habitat due to the presence of dams throughout the basin. The recent completion of one of the most significant fish restoration projects in the Upper Midwest makes passage around two hydroelectric dams on the Menominee River possible for Lake Michigan’s sturgeon population.

Lake Michigan sturgeon once numbered over two million. Fish biologists estimate that there are currently only about 3,000 adult fish—a decline of over 99%. This project was developed to enable lake sturgeon to access habitat upstream of the Park Mill Dam and Menominee Dam and to return back down to Lake Michigan. In summary, the fish are lifted up in an "elevator" at the Menominee Dam, moved by truck and then deposited upstream of the Park Mill Dam. On the way downstream, fish slide down two "waterslides" made out of holes cut in each dam.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provided \$6M in Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding for this project. The dam owner, Eagle Creek Renewable Energy, also contributed significantly to the project. The Fund for Lake Michigan provided private funding. Other project partners include U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wisconsin DNR, Michigan DNR, Michigan Hydropower Reform Coalition and River Alliance of Wisconsin.

“This unique collaboration among state and federal agencies, non-profit conservation organizations, and businesses demonstrates how public-private partnerships can be a powerful conservation tool. The Menominee Sturgeon Fish Passage Partnership is something the state, region, and nation should be proud of," stated Raj Shukla, Executive Director, River Alliance of Wisconsin.

A behind-the-scenes tour was recently held for elected officials, local dignitaries and funding agencies to showcase the value of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding for wildlife in the Menominee River and the local economy.

About the River Alliance of Wisconsin:

Formed in 1993, River Alliance of Wisconsin is a statewide non-profit, non-partisan citizen advocacy organization that works to protect and restore Wisconsin’s rivers and watersheds.

The organization's membership includes more than 2,500 individuals and businesses and more than 80 local watershed groups - one of the largest memberships of statewide river groups in the country. For more information, visit www.wisconsinrivers.org.

Project Partners: Eagle Creek Renewable Energy, Wisconsin DNR, Michigan DNR, Michigan Hydropower Reform Coalition, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and River Alliance of Wisconsin.

Video URL: <https://vimeo.com/230495153>

Image 1: SturgeonPassage_SturgeonCatch.jpg

"Darren Kramer, Michigan DNR, holds a 15 year old sturgeon that came up the lift."

Image 2: SturgeonPassage_Tour.jpg

"Jennifer Johnson, Michigan DNR, leads a tour of the fish passage project for elected officials, local dignitaries and others including Vicki Elkin, Executive Director of Fund for Lake Michigan."

Image 3: SturgeonPassage_Dam.jpg

"Elected officials and others looking downstream from the Menominee Dam as they tour the fish passage project."