FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 30, 2009

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Lt. Governor Cherry Announces $10 Million Grant for Muskegon Lake Restoration Project

Lt. Governor John Cherry announced today that a major wetland and wildlife habitat restoration project on Muskegon Lake has been awarded a $10 million American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (Recovery Act) grant by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The Recovery Act grant will improve aquatic habitat for fish and other species by removing over 180,000 tons of degraded lake bottom sediment and restoring 10,000 feet of Lake Muskegon shoreline now hardened by materials including foundry slag, broken concrete, and sheet metal.

“This grant will create or retain 125 construction and engineering jobs, help restore an important waterway in Michigan, and continue Michigan’s economic recovery and transformation” said Cherry. “It’s the kind of win-win result that is the focus of our Green Jobs for Blue Waters Initiative we announced in April.”

Last year, as Chair of the Great Lakes Commission, Lt. Governor Cherry helped secure a $50,000 NOAA grant to develop habitat projects in Muskegon Lake. As a result of that initial effort, the Great Lakes Commission will partner with the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission to implement this NOAA habitat restoration project.

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Based on previous analysis by the Brookings Institute, it is expected that the Muskegon Lake project will also ultimately result in increased local property values, along with generating more tourism and recreation opportunities.

“In conversations with hundreds of Michigan citizens in developing our MI-Great Lakes Plan last year, I heard great local interest and support for habitat restoration. That’s the message I took to Washington when I presented our plan to the Obama administration in February,” Cherry said.

In April, that message was reinforced when Michigan organizations applied for more than $90 million in NOAA Recovery Act funding for “shovel ready” habitat projects. Lt. Governor Cherry indicated he will be working with the Obama administration to ensure other critical Great Lakes restoration projects receive funding as well.

“I am hopeful that President Obama’s proposed Great Lakes Restoration Initiative will allow for funding more of the Michigan projects submitted to NOAA,” Cherry concluded.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality is implementing restoration actions in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the local community based advisory council, the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership. The Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership has taken an active role in bringing the community together to support restoration and remediation of Muskegon Lake. Because of local leadership, this habitat restoration project was well-organized, well-supported, and ready to be funded for implementation.

The ultimate goal of the area of concern (AOC) program is to officially delist when beneficial uses have been restored. This habitat restoration will accelerate the

pace that Muskegon Lake will achieve environmental cleanup standards ultimately leading to the delisting of the AOC designation.

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