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### **INITIATIVE SUPPORTS SCHOOL-COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION EFFORTS IN THE RIVER RAISIN WATERSHED**

MONROE, Mich. – Thanks to a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, local high school students who identified major environmental problems are now implementing plans to improve the health of local ecosystems.

The River Raisin Watershed Restoration Initiative teams high schools within the watershed – an area covering 1,072 square miles in southeast Michigan and northwest Ohio – with conservation groups, businesses and government agencies. Through an initiative led by the River Raisin Institute (RRI), the high school students identified local environmental problems and, together with teachers and representatives of community organizations, developed the plans to implement restoration projects addressing these problems.

“The initiative increases opportunities for young people to discover and act on the issues impacting the environment as part of their formal education,” explains Michael Neumann, executive director of RRI.

“It also establishes partnerships which foster opportunities for local stewardship. It deepens our understanding of the interconnectedness of local, regional and global water resources, and fosters a sense of shared responsibility for the health of the environment.”

Six high schools have partnered with numerous community organizations and are in various stages of planning local environmental restoration projects. An additional three schools are anticipated to join the initiative.

Restoration work is scheduled to start this spring and be completed by December 2008. Local restoration projects identified include:

- Bolles Harbor Mathematics and Science Center – reseeded five acres of wild rice in Sterling State Park
- Monroe High School – restoring three acres of wet prairie and developing a 1,000-square-foot prairie garden in Bolles Harbor
- Orchard High School – installing a 3,000-square-foot native plant rain garden
- Saline High School – restoring a one-acre wetland site
- Deerfield High School – working with local farmers to adopt grass filter strips and other technologies to reduce runoff
- Morenci High School – constructing a demonstration stream bank stabilization project.

“The River Raisin Watershed Initiative is educational for the adults involved, as well as for the students,” Neumann says. “It’s also proving to be a real asset to building a sense of community.”

*The River Raisin Institute is a Monroe-based nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting transformational education and sustainable community for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. For more information on this and other RRI programs visit*

*[www.rriearth.org](http://www.rriearth.org).*

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