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Milwaukee River Watershed Fish Passage Program: Making Connections Across Our Watershed

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OZAUKEE COUNTY RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD FOR FISH PASSAGE PROGRAM

PORT WASHINGTON, WI (JULY 14, 2011): The National Association of Counties (NACo) recently announced that Ozaukee County is a 2011 recipient of an Achievement Award for the Planning and Parks Department's "Fish Passage in the Milwaukee River Watershed Program" (Program). The Program reconnects existing, high quality habitat in Milwaukee River tributaries to Lake Michigan, the Milwaukee Estuary, and lower reaches of the mainstem Milwaukee River. It also forges new connections between Ozaukee, Milwaukee, and other counties, municipalities, businesses, schools, NGO's, citizens, volunteers, and state and federal agencies.

Much of Wisconsin's quality aquatic habitat has been lost or significantly altered. Many pockets of quality natural aquatic habitat remain in the Milwaukee River Watershed, but are isolated. Fish and aquatic life move around streams to reproduce, grow, and survive. Impediments and barriers on rivers and streams (including dams, debris jams, reaches of invasive vegetation, and pervious fill deposits) can inhibit aquatic life movement and access to existing habitats. This directly affects species abundance and distribution, genetic diversity, and recreational opportunities.

The Program removes or reconstructs these impediments, benefitting endangered, threatened, game, and non-game species. Since 2007, the Program has removed over 150 impediments to fish passage, including the construction of a fishway at the Thiensville- Mequon Dam, removal of the Lime Kiln Dam, multiple road and stream crossing reconstructions, and the removal of debris jams and reaches of invasive vegetation.

"We are very proud of our accomplishments and appreciate the tremendous support from all Program partners and contributors. We are committed to making the Milwaukee River and its watershed viable, attractive, and self-sustaining" said Matt Aho, Fish Passage Program Manager. "Program activities continue to directly benefit the natural resources of Ozaukee County while fostering a growing sense of environmental and community stewardship here in Southeastern Wisconsin. The Program is providing tangible economic benefits such as improvements to infrastructure, the creation and retention of jobs, and boosts to recreational and tourism interests" said County Board Supervisor Jennifer Rothstein.

Founded in 1935, NACo is the only national organization that represents county governments across the United States and provides essential services to 3,068 counties. This Achievement Award recognizes quality, efficient, and responsive management and administration, and commends this Program as an “effective an innovative program which contributes to and enhances county government in the United States”.

Ozaukee County is honored to have received this monumental recognition.

For additional information, contact Matt Aho, Program Manager, at (262) 236-2005 or visit the Program website at

http://www.co.ozaukee.wi.us/planningparks/PlanningParks_Fish_Passage.htm.