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**A Destination of Choice:
City of Manistee Expands Access to World Class Fishery**

Manistee, Michigan - The City of Manistee will open a new barrier free lift on August 18, 2009 at their Municipal Marina to connect people of all abilities with one of the world's greatest fishery and recreational resources.

The facilities are located in the Municipal Marina at 480 River Street, Manistee. They include a lift and sling to help people who use wheel chairs and others who are unable to get in and out of boats without assistance. A Davit Marine Crane will be used to load and unload wheelchairs and other heavy items. Those wishing to use the facilities should call the City at 723-2533 in advance to ensure that staff are available to provide assistance.

The facilities were purchased under a \$20,000 grant to the City of Manistee from the Access to Recreation program created by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and administered by the Michigan Recreation and Park Association Foundation.

Manistee Mayor Cyndy Fuller will lead a community ribbon cutting ceremony at 10 a.m. on August 18 that will include local, state and federal organizations, representatives from the charter boat industry and others at the Municipal Marina and a demo of the facilities. Mark Chmura, Captain of "Pier Pressure," a well-known sport fishing charter out of the Port of Manistee, will assist in the demo.

"Our fresh water sea is a remarkable resource," Chmura said. "It provides one of the most bountiful sport fishing opportunities in the world. Perhaps more importantly, it also provides us with opportunities to reflect, relax, explore and discover. We are proud that Manistee is taking the leadership to extend these opportunities to people with special needs."

The Marina is located on the Manistee River channel that connects Manistee Lake with Lake Michigan. Manistee Lake is fed by the Big Manistee River at the north end of the Lake and the Little Manistee River at the south end of the Lake. These rivers, along with stocking programs of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division, support world-class sport fishing for migratory salmon, trout and other fish species. Nearly 50,000 salmon and trout harvest annually in the two river systems, not including thousands of fish caught by anglers on Lake Michigan.

"The City's Strategic Plan gives high priority to making Manistee a destination of choice for people of all needs and abilities," Fuller said. "We have a world class fishery and recreational resource at our doorstep. We want people world-wide, regardless of their circumstances, to come here to use and enjoy these fabulous natural assets."

"It's another great day for everyone to see what is being done in Manistee to make world-class resources accessible to the entire world," said Richard Knechtges, Manistee resident and president of the local chapter of the National Association for Physically Handicapped. "Over 19% of the population in the U.S., about 54.4 million people, have some form of disability. Further, over 52% of people over 65 years of age have disabilities and our population in Manistee County, Michigan and the U.S. is getting older. Big steps are being taken in Manistee County to see that people of all ages and abilities have equal opportunities to safely reach, enjoy, use and learn from the county's

rich water resources. Based on my personal experiences with Charter guides in Manistee, I can assure everyone that the salmon and trout fishing out of Manistee is fantastic.”

“This is one in a series of steps to expand access to all populations to enjoy and appreciate the City of Manistee, including our water resources,” said Manistee City Manager Mitch Deisch. “With the support of the Great Lakes Fishery Trust, we will soon have a new, state-of-the-art, universally accessible fishing pier at our Arthur Street Boat Launch on Manistee Lake along with new parking and restroom facilities, all great compliments to the universally accessible fishing pier that was installed at the Stronach Boat Launch last year near the Little Manistee River at the south end of Manistee Lake. We have a new ADA-compliant beach house on our Fifth Street Lake Michigan Beach along with barrier free walkways to help people with special needs safely reach the beach. There is also a new, comprehensive concept plan for transforming much of our First Street Beach area into an area that will attract people of all ages and abilities to enjoy various forms of recreation and relaxation.



**Richard Knechtges Makes Use of
New Municipal Marina Lift**



Conceptual Drawing of New Manistee City Marina Building

Deisch said that the City is seeking an additional \$200,000 in public or private funding to complete the \$750,000 ADA-compliant Manistee Municipal Marina expansion and improvements, immediately adjacent to the new lift facilities.

“The City’s Strategy is to have the finest facilities and amenities on the Lake Michigan shoreline to support resident and non-resident boaters. Securing the remaining funding for the marina expansion is significant toward attaining that strategic goal,” Deisch said.

Deisch also noted that the City is working with the Manistee County Community Foundation, Michigan Easter Seals and others toward a vision of making Manistee County a premier destination for universal access to lakes, rivers and streams.

“The new lift station is a great addition to our community that will help extend our water-rich environment to all people,” said Manistee County Community Foundation Executive Director Laura Heintzelman. “We are working with the City and interests throughout the County to implement a three-year plan to be unveiled later this summer that will move Manistee County toward becoming a global destination for access to water resources. We are thankful for the support that we have received from a number of organizations to realize this goal, including the Great Lakes Fishery Trust, Michigan and National Easter Seals organizations, the Access to Recreation Program, the Department of Natural Resource and others.”

“Since salmon were introduced to the Great Lakes in Manistee County in the mid-1960’s, recreational fishing has been a significant economic force for the area,” said Howard Vaas, President of the Manistee Charter Boat Association. “The success of anglers fishing out of Manistee for salmon and trout is consistently outstanding. With these new facilities and our plans for the future, we want everyone -- families, kids, visitors and others -- to know that we provide exciting, accessible opportunities for everyone to enjoy the thrill of sport fishing in a world-class setting.”