

ST. LOUIS RIVER ALLIANCE NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Julene Boe, Executive Director, (218) 733-9520, slrcac@stlouisriver.org

Piping Plover Shorebird Recovery Gets Boost with Grant

DULUTH, Minn. -- The St. Louis River Alliance has received a grant of \$250,000 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program for a five-year project to restore piping plover nesting habitat to Wisconsin Point and the St. Louis River Estuary.

Piping plovers are one of the most endangered shorebirds in the world, and have not been known to nest locally in over 25 years. Fewer than 70 breeding pairs exist in the Great Lakes, mostly in Michigan. The project supports the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's goals of restoring the population of plovers in the Great Lakes to 150 breeding pairs, and maintaining a viable plover population within a critical area of the region so that the species can be removed from the Threatened and Endangered Species List. The project will also help restore habitat and wildlife populations to the estuary as part of the process to have it delisted as a Great Lakes Area of Concern.

"With the plover population in the Great Lakes on the upswing, the time is right to attract piping plovers for nesting in the estuary and on Wisconsin Point," said Julene Boe, executive director of the St. Louis River Alliance. "This area has good potential for re-colonization because plovers from Michigan are emigrating west as available habitat fills. Plovers already come here during their migration. We hope to give them a reason to stay and nest."

Beginning this fall, project work will involve developing nesting habitat on two sites: the Wisconsin Point Wildlife Area on the St. Louis River bay side of Wisconsin Point, and Shafer Beach on the Lake Superior side of Wisconsin Point. Early next spring a public outreach and education campaign will begin and project staff will respond to any plover nesting that occurs. The public will have opportunities to be involved as trained volunteers to assist in spotting and monitoring piping plover activities.

A committee of natural resource managers from several government agencies including the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the City of Superior, Douglas County and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will guide the project. The work will be conducted in concert with plover habitat restoration efforts by the Douglas County Land and Water Conservation Department.

"The USFWS Coastal Program is excited to work with the Alliance and other local partners involved with this project," said Ted Koehler, biologist with the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Conservation Office in Ashland, Wisc. "This effort will provide important habitat for piping plover and other migratory birds that use these sites."

"This is a wonderful opportunity to restore piping plovers to an area where they last nested over 25 years ago and to create new habitat for them," said Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Avian Ecologist Sumner Matteson. "I'm excited about the partnerships involved and look forward to seeing this shorebird return to the Duluth-Superior area."

The St. Louis River Alliance is a local nonprofit organization that partners with local, state, tribal and federal agencies as well as other nonprofits to clean up, restore and protect the St. Louis River, an Area of Concern on the Great Lakes. The Alliance also promotes and sponsors programs and activities that foster public awareness of river issues and highlight the river as a vital economic asset to the region and world.

For information on the St. Louis River Alliance, visit www.StLouisRiver.org, or call (218) 733-9520.

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