



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 12, 2012

MEDIA CONTACTS:
Naomi Patton, Mayor's Office, 313-628-4255
Sara Wurfel, Governor's Office, 517-335-6397
Ed Golder, DNR, 517-335-3014

Detroit, state partner to rejuvenate Belle Isle

DETROIT – Gov. Rick Snyder and Detroit Mayor Dave Bing today announced a tentative landmark agreement to preserve, protect and enhance Belle Isle as a state park. The city of Detroit will maintain ownership under the agreement with the state of Michigan and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) leasing the land under contract.

“Michiganders have enjoyed Belle Isle for more than a century,” Gov. Snyder said. “From the conservatory and museum to sporting events and family picnics, this historic landmark has brought fond memories to all who have visited. Establishing Belle Isle as a state park provides needed financial relief to Detroit without it relinquishing ownership, brings long overdue restoration and enhancements to the park, and guarantees a beautiful place for Michigan residents to enjoy for decades to come.”

Snyder said the proposed agreement will help generate economic development and neighborhood revitalization, which are core to Detroit’s and Michigan’s reinvention.

“This city-state collaboration will return Belle Isle to its original beauty through major improvements and regular maintenance overseen by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources,” said Detroit Mayor Dave Bing. “It presents a win-win situation for the City and the entire State, by preserving a historic destination in the City of Detroit.”

The lease creates a cooperative agreement between the city of Detroit and the state of Michigan to manage Belle Isle for the benefit of the public. The park’s operations, maintenance and improvements will be managed by the DNR and funded through the Michigan State Parks Endowment Fund and through other sources. Additionally, the state Department of Transportation (MDOT) will assume responsibility for roads and bridges on Belle Isle.

No rent will be paid for the lease. Operation, maintenance and improvement projects will be considered compensation. A 11-member advisory council consisting of five representatives appointed by the governor, three representatives appointed by the mayor of the city of Detroit, two representatives appointed by the Detroit City Council, and one member who shall chair the committee jointly appointed by the governor and mayor, will advise the parties on implementation of improvements and master planning for the park. The city and state will also work cooperatively with the Belle Isle Conservancy.

-MORE-

Under the proposed lease agreement:

- The lease is 30 years from the time it is approved by the Detroit City Council. The lease would be extended for two additional 30-year periods, unless the city or state provides written notice to the other party of its intent to not extend the lease.
- The state can terminate the lease after 18 months' prior notification to the city providing written notice. The city can call negotiating sessions to resolve obstacles to continuing the lease. The city can terminate the lease for cause if the state fails to fulfill the terms of the lease.
- The Recreation Passport, which offers annual access to all Michigan state parks and recreation areas across the state, will not be immediately required for entry to Belle Isle. The Passport will be required for visitors to Belle Isle beginning March 31, 2013. Park goers on foot or entering the park via public transportation will not need a pass and can enter for free.
- All park revenue from grants, endowments and other sources that derive from Belle Isle will be placed in a special sub-account in the Department of Natural Resources State Park improvement account to administer, maintain and improve the park. The balance of that account will transfer to the city upon termination of the lease.
- The state will provide the mayor and Detroit City Council with annual reports, including management of the park and accounting of all park revenue. The city has the right to review and audit the state's records related to park revenue each year.
- The city and state will together develop a detailed security plan for the park.
- The DNR will improve the park based on a phased management plan. The improvements will remain with the park even after the lease is terminated.
- MDOT will develop an asset management plan outlining short- and long-term strategies to maintain the roads and bridges in an acceptable condition using Act 51 funds.
- The city and the state will work cooperatively with the Belle Isle Conservancy to develop a master plan to improve the park.

The proposed lease agreement now goes to the Detroit City Council for its review and consideration.

#####