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## Despite delays, developers plan Humbug Marsh work

### Firm to break ground on project this spring

February 26, 2001

**BY DAN SHINE**

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

GIBRALTAR -- Nearly a year ago, the developers of Humbug Marsh announced that they would break ground soon on the controversial housing project and nine-hole golf course along the Detroit River.

But since then, the 409 wooded acres has been still. No rumbling bulldozers. No buzzing chain saws. No builders pounding nails.

The lack of activity has given hope to those who say that the riverfront land with wetlands, nesting for birds and vital fish spawning grounds is environmentally important and should be preserved.

"No news is good news," said Kathy LaPointe, a Gibraltar councilwoman who opposes the development. "We're all enjoying the peace and quiet."

But Tina Bassett, spokeswoman for developer Made In Detroit, said the company still plans to develop the land.

"We're still in the process of the engineering study," she said. "We have not been able to move forward because of the lousy winter. We're in a holding pattern right now."

But the change in pace of construction has puzzled opponents and launched lots of rumors. Made In Detroit often spoke about how eager it was to start work.

"We've heard rumors all over the map," said Bruce Jones of Grosse Ile, a project opponent. "It's really a frustrating thing. If you don't know what your opponent is doing," how do you prepare a defense?

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Among the rumors are that Made In Detroit is broke and can't pay its bills, and that a national development company has given it an infusion of cash.

None are true, Bassett said. Made In Detroit plans to break ground in the spring and then sell the lots for 295 homes to builders, as it originally planned.

The company originally wanted to develop the property to build 350 homes and a nine-hole golf course. In 1999, the Detroit office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ruled that Made In Detroit could not build homes on Humbug Island or on the mainland adjacent to the marsh. It said that the company could build only on 150 to 200 acres away from the Detroit River.

Made In Detroit revised its plan, reduced the number of homes by 55 and said it no longer needs the corps' approval because the new development didn't come near the wetlands. The corps disagrees, and the dispute will likely end up in court.

"Right now, we're focused on getting in the ground and making this happen," Bassett said.

Blair McGowan, another outspoken opponent of the development, said he is skeptical that Made In Detroit will begin the project because of the company's failed developments.

LaPointe also has doubts that the project will be started. She said she hopes that the land will be turned into a nature preserve.

"I think the general opinion is that it would be great to see that property preserved as it is," LaPointe said. "We don't need a housing development. I don't think the majority wants it."

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