

Preserving the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area (*former Denison South*)



The Wild Heart of Saugatuck

Imagine Oval Beach Park in Saugatuck without the amazing stretch of beach to the north – that pristine shoreline, now untouched by development. This property is at serious risk of being changed forever if development plans proceed and houses are built upon the fragile dunes.

The raw beauty and ecological importance of the landscape truly make this property the *Wild Heart of Saugatuck*—well-loved by residents throughout Michigan, an inspiration to countless artists, a jewel of natural wonders, and a place that defines the unique experience of Saugatuck.

Resources Worth Protecting

This magnificent swath of dune ecosystem includes an amazing diversity of habitats and resources: 3,650 feet of Lake Michigan shoreline, populations of at least 6 rare plant and animal species including the prairie warbler (state endangered status) and Blanchard's cricket frog (state threatened), open dunes, interdunal wetlands, natural jack pine forest, hardwood-pine dune forest, Great Lakes marsh, 4,452 feet on an oxbow lake, the south pier of the Kalamazoo River mouth, 1,650 feet of Kalamazoo River shoreline, and a historic site known as "Fishtown".

An Opportunity to Preserve

The current landowner has offered to sell the 171-acre property to the City of Saugatuck so that they can establish the "Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area" adjacent to Oval Beach and Mt. Baldhead City Parks. This Natural Area would be open to the public for non-motorized recreation such as hiking, birdwatching, fishing, nature study, and photography.

A public-private partnership was created to respond to this offer. As with earlier attempts to secure this property, a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund is seen as crucial to the fund raising effort.

How You Can Help

You can express your support for the City's "Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area" project by sending a letter to the Grants Management Program, MDNR, PO Box 30425, Lansing, MI 48909-7925 (Fax #: 517-335-6813). Letters should be received by February 1st. The Trust Fund board will be meeting on February 4, 2009, in Lansing.

For more information, please contact the Land Conservancy of West Michigan, 616-451-9476 or lcwm@naturenearby.org.

Conceptual Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area Master Plan

