



## news release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## LAND CONSERVANCY NEARS 7,500 PROTECTED ACRES

GRAND RAPIDS: 2010 saw many successes for the Land Conservancy of West Michigan, a local non-profit land trust with the mission of *keeping nature nearby*. With 5 new projects this past year, the Land Conservancy has now protected nearly 7,500 acres in its 35 year history. These acres preserve miles of shoreline, wildlife habitat and additions to already existing public parks.

On the Pere Marquette River, two new conservation easements were established that protect forests, wetlands, and frontage along the river and its tributaries. A conservation easement is a legal agreement that a landowner creates with an organization such as the Land Conservancy of West Michigan in order to protect the natural qualities of their land by permanently limiting its development. The family continues to own and live on the land and the land stays private, but the property can never be split or sold for development purposes.

The Pere Marquette is a nationally designated wild and scenic river with some of the best trout fishing in the Midwest. The Land Conservancy now has protected over 1,700 acres on land adjacent to, or near the Pere Marquette and its tributaries.

The Land Conservancy also created a new conservation easement along the Muskegon River. Over the last several years, the Land Conservancy has been able to protect over 500 acres with nearly 5 miles of Muskegon River frontage in the highly used corridor surrounding the City of Newaygo. This stretch of river is extremely popular in all parts of the year, with several access points along the river for river users.

North of Montague along Lake Michigan, Muskegon County's Meinert Park doubled its size through a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant, willing and cooperative landowners, and fundraising spearheaded by the Land Conservancy. Meinert Park now totals nearly 180 acres that includes sandy beachfront, rugged backdune and high quality wetland habitats. A dedication of this addition will be held early summer 2011.

The Land Conservancy was also able to complete phase I of the transfer of the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area to the City of Saugatuck. This project was purchased by the Land Conservancy from a private landowner in 2009 and the full 171 acres will be transferred to the city by the end of 2011.

"We're excited about the quality of the lands we preserve, not just the number of acres," says Peter Homeyer, the Land Conservancy of West Michigan's Executive Director. "The Land Conservancy has now protected over 47 miles of river, creek and Lake Michigan shoreline. We want to assure the best of West Michigan's land and waterways remains natural now and for the future of our region."

For additional information, please contact the Land Conservancy of West Michigan at 616-451-9476, email [lcwm@naturenearby.org](mailto:lcwm@naturenearby.org) or visit [www.naturenearby.org](http://www.naturenearby.org).

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The Land Conservancy of West Michigan is a local, nonprofit organization that preserves natural land and open space in eight West Michigan counties. It is the only organization devoted solely to preserving natural and scenic lands that are an important part of West Michigan's community character. With thirty-plus years of experience keeping nature nearby, the Land Conservancy has protected over 7,300 acres with nature preserves, conservation easements, and project assistance to local governments.