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**LAND CONSERVANCY OF WEST MICHIGAN DIRECTOR,  
JULIE STONEMAN, STEPS DOWN**

*September 10, 2008, Grand Rapids*– Today the Land Conservancy of West Michigan announced the departure of its long-time Executive Director, Julie Stoneman. Stoneman leaves the nonprofit land trust at the end of September. She served as director for over eight years.

During Stoneman’s tenure, the amount of natural land protected by the 32 year-old organization rose from 939 acres to over 4,700 acres, including the addition of eight of its thirteen nature preserves. In that time, membership grew from about 450 to over 1,900 individuals, families and businesses that currently support it.

“Julie has provided tremendous leadership for the Land Conservancy of West Michigan during an important part of our evolution. While we are tremendously sad to lose her, we totally understand her need to make this change,” said Rick Chapla, President of the Land Conservancy’s Board of Directors.

Stoneman cited personal and professional reasons for departure. “Our momentum and growth have significantly increased over the past few years and while that’s been extremely rewarding, it has become a much tougher struggle to balance work and home when the office is fifty miles away and our service area many, many miles beyond that,” said Stoneman who lives in Grand Ledge near Lansing.

Stoneman will continue her conservation career with the Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation Policy, a nonprofit organization serving a coalition of Michigan-based land trusts including the Land Conservancy of West Michigan. “In many respects, I’m stepping aside from the Land Conservancy as Executive Director but not stepping away. I will be able to continue to assist and support the Land Conservancy, but in a different capacity.”

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Chapla stated that the Land Conservancy Board of Directors is expected to name Peter Homeyer as Interim Director at its September 10 board meeting. Homeyer is currently the Land Conservancy's Development Coordinator and has been on staff with the organization since 2005.

"It has been such an honor to work for the Land Conservancy. We have an outstanding board, incredible staff and wonderful supporters and partners all working to protect the best of West Michigan's natural landscape," Stoneman added. "It was a tough decision for me to make but I honestly believe the best is yet to come for the Land Conservancy. Just as I was able to build on the work of those before me, the next Executive Director will be able to take the organization to new heights of conservation excellence—and I am looking forward to supporting that as a Land Conservancy member and through Heart of the Lakes."

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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 over thirty years of experience keeping nature nearby, the Land Conservancy has protected more than 4,700 acres with nature preserves, conservation easements, and project assistance to local governments.