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FAMILY LAND PROTECTED IN SAUGATUCK WITH CONSERVATION EASEMENT

Saugatuck - A 5-generation family legacy is preserved with the year-end donation of a conservation easement to the Land Conservancy of West Michigan on a former farm on the outskirts of the City of Saugatuck. This gift from Paul McEnroe to the Land Conservancy also helps preserve the community's historic and natural character that are vitally important to its status as an important tourism destination in Michigan.

The McEnroe's family once owned a large orchard along Holland Street, the major route into Saugatuck from the north. Like many family farms in the area, the pressure to develop the former orchard's meadows and woods reached a new level of intensity in the past few years, especially as plans were formulated for the nearby "Denison" property now owned by millionaire Aubrey McClendon.

Instead of accepting offers from developers, McEnroe chose to make his commitment to the preservation of the farm's natural habitats and rural character permanent by donating a conservation easement for his 26-acre property to the Land Conservancy.

McEnroe, an award-winning investigative reporter for the Minneapolis Star Tribune, offers these thoughts on the importance of creating a conservation easement for his family's land:

"My great-grandfather and his wife came out of upper New York and gambled everything they had to create this homestead in 1868. The remaining 26 acres of land that was once a thriving fruit farm, part of which still fronts the Kalamazoo River near the mouth to Lake Michigan, has been in my family for five generations.

"Putting this last remnant – woods, wetland and open grassland – into a conservation easement for perpetuity seemed to be the most natural way to honor the legacy of my ancestors' land stewardship, acknowledge the incredible dedication of the people around Saugatuck who are now fighting to preserve the unique dunes environment and a way to teach those who come after us about the importance of preservation and the ethic of giving back to community.

"Today I walk this land knowing there is always going to be greenway from Lake Michigan, Tallmadge Woods, across the river to my land and over to the Blue Star. A small gesture but at least I know there will always be a wild place for the wild turkeys, gray tree frogs, deer, coyote, eagles and osprey. Without the help of...the Land Conservancy's staff, this small token back to the community would never have been possible. The McEnroe family is indebted for [the Land Conservancy's] help."

In January 2009, the Saugatuck-Douglas community was named as one of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's "Dozen Distinctive Destinations", in large measure because of the community's success in preserving its unique lakeshore setting and historic character that have served as a source of inspiration for world renown artists for over 100 years.

The McEnroe family farm is an important part of this distinctive landscape and we thank Paul and his family for helping us to "keep nature nearby".

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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 5,000 acres with nature preserves, conservation easements, and project assistance to local governments.