



news release

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Trust Fund Approves \$10.5 Million Grant for Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area

LANSING, Mich. — Leaders from the City of Saugatuck, Land Conservancy of West Michigan (LCWM) and The Nature Conservancy today thanked members of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board for awarding a \$10.5 million grant to help acquire the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area, 171-acre south portion of the McClendon property (formerly the Denison property) adjacent to Saugatuck's Oval Beach City Park.

The board voted to spread the \$10.5 million grant over the next three years. The award is less than the \$12.6 million grant requested by the group attempting to purchase the land. Funding for the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund comes from oil and gas revenues off of state-leased land. The Trust Fund is constitutionally protected to be dedicated solely to the protection of the state's natural resources and for outdoor recreation.

“The City of Saugatuck is extremely grateful to the Trust Fund Board members for approving one of the largest grants they've ever awarded,” said Saugatuck Mayor Barry Johnson. “This project has always had a lot of momentum, but now we need to re-group and think about how to best move forward.”

LCWM signed the agreement to purchase the property in October, contingent on the Trust Fund grant providing a \$12.6 million award.

“We thank the Trust Fund Board members for this critical funding,” said LCWM Executive Director Peter Homeyer. “Due to the terms of the purchase agreement, we have some work to do and have to consider our options. However, this is a major commitment from the state that demonstrates their support of this project.”

“Thanks to the generosity of the Trust Fund Board, we have the opportunity to continue exploring options to protect this critical stretch of Lake Michigan shoreline,” said Helen Taylor, The Nature Conservancy's State Director for Michigan. “We know through the extraordinary

early commitment of private individuals that people care deeply about seeing these dunes protected.”

Saugatuck City Councilmember Tony Vettori said that the Saugatuck area attracts about 2 million visitors each year to the small town with a year-round population of 1,065.

“Saving this stretch of Lake Michigan shoreline will connect critical public recreation points that should attract even more people to Saugatuck and the surrounding community,” Vettori said.

The property is part of the world’s largest freshwater dune system, provides habitat for rare and declining species, and is one of the finest examples of Michigan’s characteristic Great Lakes shoreline. More information about freshwater dunes can be found [here](#).

Photography available for use at: <http://s684.photobucket.com/albums/vv204/soulesister7>

[Please credit as: “Courtesy of The Nature Conservancy”.]