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CONSERVATION EASEMENT FOREVER PROTECTS TALLMADGE WOODS

More than 70 acres of natural dune and forest land in Saugatuck Township will be protected forever.

Saugatuck Township, MI – In a unique partnership, on July 7, 2008, the Land Conservancy of West Michigan, the City of Saugatuck, and the Ox-Bow School of Art and Artist Residency signed a conservation easement that permanently protects more than 70 acres of forested and open dunes, a large emergent marsh wetland, and undeveloped frontage on both the Kalamazoo River and a small private lake known as the Oxbow Lagoon.

This was the first time the City of Saugatuck used a conservation easement to permanently preserve City property, and it is the only known example of a residential school of art choosing to forever limit the development of its natural land.

The protected land borders the campus of the Ox-Bow School of Art and Artist Residency and includes most of “Tallmadge Woods.” The Woods was willed to Ox-Bow in 1936 by one of the school’s early supporters, Thomas E. Tallmadge. The deed was transferred to the City of Saugatuck in 1941 with the provision that the School could continue to use the property as long as it existed. The natural beauty of Tallmadge Woods has long been a source of inspiration for local and visiting artists.

As with the other 46 conservation easements held by the Land Conservancy in West Michigan, this legal agreement will forever limit the property’s development by current and future landowners and will allow the independent, non-profit Land Conservancy to monitor and protect the conservation values of the property.

Tallmadge Woods is part of the larger ecosystem around the mouth of the Kalamazoo River that includes Oval Beach Park, Saugatuck Dunes State Park and the property formerly owned by the Denison family. The scenic view of Tallmadge Woods from the Lake Michigan shoreline and the City of Saugatuck is a major feature for the community. In addition, the dune ecosystem, emergent marsh, and shorelines are of high quality natural. Many rare plant and wildlife species call Tallmadge Woods home, including Blanchard’s cricket frogs, pileated woodpeckers and eastern box turtles.

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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.