



Nature's Observer

Preservation Time is Drawing Near

The County of Lapeer was the first in the state to set up an Agricultural Preservation Board. This action, taken by county commissioners in 2002, was part of a strong progressive movement to protect our working farms, wetlands and natural scenic areas for future generations.

A land use survey sponsored by the Americana Foundation & the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts revealed that residents of Lapeer County strongly support farmland preservation:

Over 67% said it is extremely important for governments to take action to help protect farmland.

More than 77% said land use and zoning ordinances should limit new homes in rural areas.

Over 77% favored public financing of farmland preservation programs.

In November 2000, 33 farmers submitted Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) applications for a total of 5,412 acres. Lack of state funding inspired a partnership of state & local groups to help county commissioners establish the agricultural preservation board.

According to the Lapeer Equalization Department, our county has lost another 31 agricultural parcels in 2004. The demand for a PDR program remains strong. Federal & state grants are available but a local match is needed. The farmland and parks proposal would fund this match.

In 1930, the people of Lapeer County voted in favor of accepting the 80-acre gift of General Squier Park from Major General George Owen Squier. In 1985, 70 acres were donated to the county by Ludwig Tor-

zewski to form Torzewski Park.

The County Parks Department also maintains three boating access points on the Flint River and a river access campground in the Lapeer State Game Area. The Parks Department works with the Polly Ann Trail and the state since it's acquisition in 1998.

The county park system currently has over 40,000 visits each year but funding is severely threatened through the depletion of the county revenue sharing reserve fund. A portion of the parks and farmland proposal will provide funding to these programs.

For more information check out:

PreservingOurFarmlandAndParks.org.

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Board of Trustees

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- Mary Brown, Vice President
- Leo Dorr, Treasurer
- Amy Elwert, Secretary
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- Mike Delling, Trustee
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Annual GLBLC Meeting

Please join fellow GLBLC members for a day of outdoor appreciation and celebration at the Sutherland Nature Sanctuary on Sunday, September 17, from noon to 4 p.m.

Please bring a dish to share and your own place settings. We will start with some exploration time, have lunch around 1 p.m. and then hold the meeting at 2 pm with a brief update on current programs and projects the GLBLC has been working on over the past year and conclude with the formalities and

election of officers.

Come early or stay late and enjoy the sanctuary. There are plenty of trails for you to enjoy. The whole family is encouraged to attend.

The Sutherland Nature Sanctuary is located just east of Hadley on Diehl Road, about a half mile south of Pratt Road.

For further details about the meeting, please contact Amy Elwert at amy@elwert.org or 810-245-6653

Benefits of preserving farmland in Lapeer County

- Lapeer's market value of agriculture production was over \$50 million based on the 2002 Agriculture Census.
- Lapeer's lands support dairy, livestock, grains, greenhouse crops, vegetables, fruit, and nurseries.
- Lapeer's climate, topography and accessibility make it uniquely suited to the production, processing, and distribution of agricultural products on a regional, national and international level.
- Agricultural land more than pays for the municipal services it requires. In contrast, taxes on residential land constantly fail to cover their costs.
- Lapeer's economic base is



scenic beauty, cultural heritage, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, hunting and recreational opportunities.

By enhancing the scenic beauty and rural character of Lapeer County and providing other open space benefits, the county's farmland increases the overall quality of life and make the county an attractive place to live and work for all of our residents.

also supported by a variety of agricultural related businesses including: farm equipment, fuel, veterinarians, grain dealers, packaging plants, and various professional services.

Open space and natural areas help maintain: rural character,

Letter from the President

Lapeer County voters have a unique opportunity this summer to vote for preservation of farmland, open space and parks. These properties are some of the resources which makes our community desirable to live and work in. For those who believe that the loss of these resources will mean more money and better living standards for our county, I would ask that you look to Oakland County to the south of us. Oakland has seen their farmland and open space disappear over the past 30 years, and while that has led to short term increase in average household income and ownership of homes, it also leading to some disquieting trends. Increased demands for services have increased taxes on residents; these increased taxes have forced hundreds of small businesses (farms) out of operation, increased the con-

version of open space to residential and commercial property and forced the expansion of government services such as sewers, water and policing, to areas which never



before required them. Now we see this expansion rapidly pushing north into Lapeer County and we can all see what the conversion of our community will look like for our children and grandchildren.

A vote to preserve open space, farmland, and parks will assure that a part of our community and heritage will survive into the future. I am not naïve enough to believe

that farmland preserved today will be farmed as it is today. My own family's farm went from a subsistence farm in my great-grandparent's time to a small crop operation with a thrashing business in my grandparent's time to a dairy farm in my parent's time to a beef farm in my lifetime. Farmland preserved in our community will offer those of future generations the opportunity to use our local resourced to operate businesses which produce food and fiber for us. They will serve to remind our heirs where their food comes from and to better serve the environment where they live.

Sincerely

Joe

Joseph Stock
President

Around Michigan

The National Wildlife Federation and the Center for Environment & Population have recently released a report on how Michigan's environment is being negatively impacted by the state's 10 million residents.

"The top conservation issues of today such as invasive species, climate change...and the lack of clean drinking water can be traced to our growing population and our consumption of resources." - Melissa

Rinkis, co-author of the report.

Key findings:

- The state loses 40,000 acres of farmland every year to urban sprawl & development. Michigan ranks 9th nationally in farmland loss.
- Michigan ranks 8th nationally in public water supply withdrawals.
- 15 species of fish are currently listed as endan-

gered or threatened.

- 81 animal species are listed as endangered or threatened in Michigan.

State officials say the report is a fairly accurate snapshot of how population growth and unrestricted land use can impact the environment as a whole.

For the complete report check out the National Wildlife Federation's Website at www.nwf.org

**GREAT LAKES
BIOREGIONAL LAND
CONSERVANCY**

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Conserving nature for the future!

TO:

We're on the Web!
www.gblbc.lapeer.org

Membership Form - Please Join Us!

If you have not already renewed your membership for 2006 it's never to late! (memberships are good January to December)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

(for electronic version of our newsletter and other important updates!)

_____ Family (\$25)

_____ Individual/Student/reduced membership (\$20)

Mail a check along with this form to: GLBLC, PO BOX 303, Lapeer MI 48446. Checks can be made payable to: Great Lakes Bioregional Land Conservancy. Please contact Amy Elwert for more details at amy@elwert.org or 810-245-6653

