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Conservancy Receives Two Grants for Water Trail Map

The Chippewa Watershed Conservancy (CWC) announced today that the organization has received two recent grants relating to production of a water trail map for the Chippewa River from the river's headwaters in Mecosta County, through Isabella County and into Midland County, where it joins the Tittabawassee River.

The Bay Area Community Foundation has awarded a \$12,000 grant from the Watershed Restoration Fund to help raise public awareness about the Chippewa River watershed and promote recreational, cultural and historic features.

Stan Lilley, Executive Director of the CWC, said, "The project will create signs to publicize the boundaries of the Chippewa River watershed. Using input to be gathered from the public and from private and public sector colleagues, we will also create a print-ready water trail map depicting important recreational, cultural and historic locations along the Chippewa River. Locations of key put-in and take-out sites for canoes and kayaks will be shown, and there will be some mile posts installed for reference and to aid in emergency location. The map will include paragraphs promoting wise use of the river, including topics such as not carrying glass and Styrofoam on the water, carrying out cans and other trash created when visiting the river, etiquette regarding quiet passage by neighborhoods, not trespassing on private property, etc."

Kristin Bovid, of the Bay Area Community Foundation, said, "We were very impressed with the high level of collaborative involvement we've been told about. This is a project that appeals on many levels."

Lilley said, "We are delighted to receive this grant award and are looking forward to working with our partners to move this project forward. This is the first phase in a long range goal to promote the river as an important recreation, tourism and business resource, and to encourage conservation and clean water. We have been meeting periodically with a number of government, Tribal, and nongovernmental organizations for more than a year to discuss topics of mutual interest regarding watershed issues. We hope there will be many more funding opportunities to benefit projects in the watershed and we are grateful to the Bay Area Community Foundation Watershed Restoration Fund for supporting this effort."

The Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN) has also awarded a \$22,550 grant to the organization to support the project.

Lilley, said, "We will be taking the project that was begun with the Bay Area Community Foundation grant to the next step in its evolutionary process with this WIN grant. The WIN project will help us create and install signage to correspond with the points on the camera-ready map produced from our Bay Area Community Foundation grant and we will have 2,500 hard copies of that map that can be distributed to the public free of charge to promote the river, generate initial awareness about the existence of a canoe and kayak trail on the river, and point future users to the interactive Web-based version of the map. The WIN grant also helps us create the web-based version of the map that will contain many more points of interest and much greater detail than we can produce on a hard copy map and will allow users the capability to download and print portions that they choose."

These grants are an outcome of dialog among an informal multi-agency (local government, Tribal and non-governmental organizations) group unofficially known as the Chippewa River Watershed Planning Group that has been meeting quarterly in Isabella County for the past year to discuss issues of mutual interest within the watershed. A Recreation Committee formed from this larger group that includes representatives from the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy, the Isabella County Community Development Department, and the Isabella County Parks and Recreation Department began in November 2010 to look for grant opportunities to support some of the goals of the larger group.

Lilley said, "We will be inviting local businesses, government entities and the public to provide suggestions for feature points to be included as we work to develop the hard copy and web-based versions of the map over the course of the next several months."

Mike Kelly, of The Conservation Fund, who also serves as the WIN grants administrator, said, "We are glad to see this project begin in the Chippewa River Watershed. WIN has supported similar programs on the Shiawassee and Cass rivers, and there has been a high degree of public support."

Lilley said, "These two grants, coupled with more than \$12,000 in cash and in-kind pledges from organizations within the Chippewa River Watershed Planning Group, provide a substantial means to get out the word about the river as an important tourism, recreation, environmental and quality of life resource impacting a large part of our local communities. We want to publicize the river for the gem that it is and at the same time encourage people to use it and protect it as a critical natural resource."

WIN is a volunteer organization that includes more than 90 citizens and organizations and focuses on opportunities to better link the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of Saginaw Bay communities in order to sustain and improve the region's quality of life. Ten area foundations and corporations work together as a network to support WIN projects. This Funders Network includes: Bay Area Community

Foundation, Consumers Energy Foundation, Harry A. and Margaret D. Towsley Foundation, Midland Area Community Foundation, Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation, Saginaw Community Foundation, The Dow Chemical Company Foundation, The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation, the S.C. Johnson Fund, and the Cook Family Foundation. More information about WIN is available on its website at www.saginawbaywin.org .

The mission of the CWC is to preserve open space and wildlife habitat for future generations through land acquisition and conservation easements. The organization has permanently protected nearly 3,500 acres of land in Isabella, Clare, Gratiot, Montcalm and Mecosta counties. For additional information, call (989) 644-5045 or visit the web site at www.ChippewaWatershedConservancy.org.

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