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Site dedicated to native plantings at SVSU the focus of new investment by the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network

\$40,000 grant supports one of region's largest native planting sites

The Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN) has announced a \$40,000 grant to Saginaw Valley State University that will support a new site dedicated to the importance of native plant species – those species that have historically been found in this region - on campus. The 40 acre site sits adjacent to the new health sciences building at the university, and will be one of the region's largest dedicated to native plant species. The location will also serve as an educational site, providing information about the importance of native species. Several departments at SVSU have joined to develop the location and provide exposure to this unique facility.

“SVSU has worked with WIN and its members several times over the years. We believe in the group's cause of helping to protect the natural environment of the Saginaw Bay Region” said Steven Hocquard, Assistant Vice President Campus Facilities. “Our native planting project will provide an opportunity for our students and staff, along with future visitors, to see a valuable way to help in this cause. We are not only receiving important financial assistance from the WIN group for this project but it has been critical to the success of the project to receive input and technical knowledge from WIN Group members in its development” continued Hocquard.



“This project continues a long history of WIN involvement with projects at SVSU”, said Michael Kelly of The Conservation Fund. The Conservation Fund administers WIN. “We believe that this project will provide a unique opportunity to showcase the importance of native plants, which are currently under threat from non-native species such as Phragmites and Purple Loosestrife, along with many other types of non-native plants commonly found at local retailers” said Kelly. “This 40 acre site will allow the public to see why native plants are important as well as provide a unique opportunity for university research and programming”, continued Kelly.

The benefit of growing plants within the region they evolved is they are more likely to thrive under the local conditions while being less likely to invade new habitats. Native plants are well adapted to local environmental conditions, maintain or improve soil fertility, reduce erosion, and often require less fertilizer and pesticides than many alien plants. These characteristics save time and money and reduce the amount of harmful run-off threatening the aquatic resources of our streams, rivers, and estuaries. Finally, native plants provide much better habitat for native animals, since they had adapted together over time.

Ten area foundations and corporations work together as a network to support WIN projects. This Foundation 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, S.C. Johnson Fund, and the Cook Family Foundation.

To date, WIN and its partners have provided more than \$4 million to support projects that help to identify the Saginaw Bay Watershed as a sustainable community. Funding is provided for projects that create opportunities to connect people, resources, organizations and programs. Priority is given to projects that are innovative, cross governmental boundaries, and attempt to balance the environment, economy, and the community. WIN grants have been matched by more than \$8 million in other funding.

More information about WIN, is available on its website at www.saginawbaywin.org.