



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 4, 2007

CONTACT:

Maggie Striz Calnin
Heart of the Lakes Center for
Land Conservation Policy
517-290-2298

Catharine Hansford
Outreach Coordinator
Land Policy Institute
517-432-8800 x.111



**Land Policy Institute to unveil *Economic Impact of Conservation* research series at
Heart of the Lakes Member Summit December 4, 2007**

Report Series Highlights Economic Importance of Natural Features

Lansing, MI— Michigan's weakened economy can be stimulated by the state's unique natural resources according to a series of research reports compiled by the Land Policy Institute (LPI) at Michigan State University (MSU) through a joint project with Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation Policy.

Research topics covered in this series report on the economic impact of land conservation related to a number of factors, including property values, effect on local economies, and the amount states spend across the nation on land conservation. The series will be highlighted at 11:30 a.m. during the Heart of the Lakes Member Summit on December 4, 2007 at the Lansing Center. (Members of the media are welcome to attend this portion of the event at no cost.)

"The Land Policy Institute is spearheading a body of research that informs many issues critical to success in the New Economy," said Dr. Soji Adelaja, LPI Director and the John A. Hannah Distinguished Professor in Land Policy at MSU. "The protection and conservation of our natural resources, and maintaining a green infrastructure in Michigan's communities, will be key to attracting and keeping the knowledge-based workers we need to build prosperity."

The first report in the series was released last month and looked at how much states spend on natural resources and environmental programs and the factors that drive those spending levels. The link between state recreation areas and local economies is considered in the second report, finding that natural resource tourism can play a major role in the health of Michigan communities. In fact, the Rifle River Recreation Area, which is the focus of second report, provides \$1.79 million in total annual economic impacts.

In the final report in the series LPI quantifies the effect of natural features on property values in Hillsdale and Oakland Counties. Properties in largely rural, agrarian Hillsdale County are expected to benefit from an 81.8 percent increase in value if within 16 yards (15 meters) of a water body. A property within 164 yards (150 meters) of a water body in Hillsdale County is expected to gain 22.9 percent higher value than a similar property that is not near a water body. Oakland County properties, being in a suburban community within the metro Detroit area, are expected to see approximately a two to three percent increase in value if within 164 yards (150 meters) of recreational lands.

"Policymakers are looking for ways to make Michigan thrive in a changing economy. These findings offer direction on how to stimulate our economy by focusing on Michigan's unique natural assets," said Rachel Kuntzsch, Executive Director for Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation Policy. "While the link between our pristine natural resources and the state's economy is fairly intuitive, these studies help to quantify that economic connection. The results provide further support for reversing the current trend of de-funding our natural resource and environmental programs for both our quality of life and our economy."

More information on this series and the Heart of the Lakes Conservation Summit on Dec. 4th can be found at www.heartofthelakes.org and www.landpolicy.msu.edu.

###