

# Heart of the Lakes

## Center for Land Conservation Policy

### *Policy Priorities*

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Heart of the Lakes is the voice and convener of Michigan's land conservancies who work to protect lands with natural, recreational, scenic, and agricultural value. Michigan land conservancies have protected hundreds of thousands of acres of coastline, forests, farmland, and other valuable land resources throughout the state. Our members strengthen and protect the integrity, resiliency and function of our ecosystems, including reducing threats to wetlands, surface and groundwater, wildlife corridors, forests, coastlines, farmland, and urban green space. Heart of the Lakes strengthens their work by researching and advocating sound public policies and providing services to our member land conservancies.

Heart of the Lakes supports policies which:

- ✓ Maintain and strengthen land conservation in the private and public sector.
- ✓ Support and protect the Constitutional mandate of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) to acquire and develop lands for resource protection and public outdoor recreation.
- ✓ Protect current and create new revenue streams dedicated to the conservation, protection and management of Michigan's natural resources.
- ✓ Mitigate threats to Michigan's land and waters.

#### **2009-10 Policy Priorities**

- Support the continued dedication of the MNRTF for the acquisition and development of lands for resource protection and public outdoor recreation, and ward off attempts to divert the Fund for other purposes.
- Advocate for funding streams and policies to expand the state's farmland preservation programs.
- Advocate for prompt passage of the MNRTF appropriations bill by the Michigan legislature to serve as an economic stimulus to local economies and increase the availability of public recreational lands.
- Work with the Michigan Attorney General's office to obtain guidance on property tax benefits through PA 446 for post-mortem conservation easements.
- Provide input to USDA NRCS on administrative rules related to the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) to encourage efficient processes and increased funding for farmland preservation in Michigan.
- Provide a guidance document to conservancies on land transactions with the state to strengthen that public-private partnership.
- Support the on-going evolution of the MNRTF scoring criteria to keep pace with the conservation and recreational needs of the State.
- Advocate for land conservation programs and their related funding during the state appropriations and departmental restructuring processes.
- Support a permanent extension of the enhanced federal income tax incentive for private lands conservation.
- Engage with other conservation partners to develop strategies for a statewide conservation vision.