

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Heart of the Lakes Land Conservancy Day at the State Capitol
Thursday, February 12, 2015

What is Land Conservancy Day?

A day dedicated in the Capitol to building awareness, appreciation and support for Michigan's land conservancies within the state legislature.

Why is a Land Conservancy Day needed?

The work of land conservancies is largely dependent on public policy (think enabling legislation for conservation easements, property tax exemption on fee owned lands, tax incentives for donating easements, public dollars to help local or state partners acquire critical lands). In these days of term limits, it's critical we build positive relationships with incoming and even current legislators, so they clearly understand and support the public policies you need to meet your mission of land protection. We'll talk more about why these relationships matter during the briefing session

How does it help Heart of the Lakes?

As your policy voice, Heart of the Lakes' work is strengthened by legislators' abilities to know and understand the conservation work you do in their districts, as well as the people (constituents) behind that work. Without that context, it is way too easy for them to turn a deaf ear when Heart of the Lakes comes knocking on their doors, especially for those who may not have an inherent interest in land conservation.

When should I make my February 12 appointment(s) with my legislator(s)?

As soon as you can commit to participating in Land Conservancy Day, please start working on those appointments. Legislators are busy when in the Capitol with House and Senate Sessions, committee meetings, etc. Don't be disappointed if you end up meeting with a staff person instead of a legislator, often time that relationship can be just as crucial as with the legislator.

My service area includes many legislator districts. How do I figure out who is the most important to meet with and how do I get contact information?

We can help you prioritize based on committee assignments, leadership etc. and get you the contact information you need.

Who should be a part of my team?

Ideally, "real constituents" are important for first-time introductions. If you want to meet with a particular legislator, consider teaming a staff with a board member or volunteer who lives in that official's district. Teams of two works best, consider bringing multiple teams to meet with more legislators!

What if I (or my organization) don't have much experience talking with legislators?

This is the perfect way to start, we'll provide all the information/training you need and even arrange a more "seasoned" partner to accompany you if you desire.

Why meet in Lansing, why not back in the legislator's District?

We encourage doing both! By coming to Lansing with other land conservancy colleagues, you'll help carry a message that there is a statewide community of independent organizations that

share similar missions and policy interests. (Flex a bit of muscle, in other words.) Plus you are more likely to meet and get to know legislative staff, often as important as the legislators themselves. But that doesn't replace the need to get them out on the land in their districts—so don't stop inviting them for special events, preserve dedications, public hikes, etc.

What if more than one land conservancy wants to meet with the same legislator?

Not a problem, we can try to make a single meeting work for two or more conservancies out of consideration for the legislator's time. But if that doesn't work, separate meetings will be okay too.

My team(s) would like to come in on Wednesday, where can I stay overnight?

For anyone wishing to secure overnight accommodations for Wednesday, February 11, discounted hotel room rates will be available within a few easy drive or bus miles from downtown, but will need to be made by January 12.

I'm going to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund meeting on Wednesday; can I still participate in Land Conservancy Day?

Absolutely! You can set up legislator visits on Wednesday afternoon, February 11, and then join the general briefing on Thursday morning.