

For Immediate Release

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Senator Stabenow: Northern Michigan to Receive Nearly \$16 Million for Land, Water Conservation

Efforts Led by Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, Leelanau Conservancy, the Conservation Resource Alliance

Support comes through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, which was created by Stabenow's 2014 Farm Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, today announced that northern Michigan will receive nearly \$8 million in public investment that will be matched by nearly \$8 million in private sector investment to support land and water conservation. Support for this project – as well as five ongoing conservation projects in Michigan – comes through the 2014 Farm Bill's Regional Conservation Partnership Program which was authored by Stabenow.

“This investment is a win-win for northern Michigan,” **Senator Stabenow said.** “It helps farmers throughout the fruit belt preserve their land for future generations while improving wildlife habitats and water quality in Lake Michigan, local lakes and rivers. When we established this program in the Farm Bill, it was exactly these types of innovative partnerships – along with the ongoing partnerships to protect lakes and watersheds in Saginaw Bay, Lake Erie, St. Joseph and others – that we envisioned.”

“The Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians are grateful for Senator Debbie Stabenow’s forward thinking advocacy for the Great Lakes,” **Mary Pelcher, GTB Tribal Manager said.** “Such foresight has led to this development of an innovative mechanism of support to bolster the efforts of a broad partnership that is actively removing obstacles infringing upon traditional lifeways, while also providing meaningful and lasting protection from a wholesale shift in land use.”

“The vital connection between farm land protection and water quality cannot be overstated. We are thrilled to be a part of this innovative partnership and approach to conservation in the Farm Bill programs,” **Glen Chown, executive director of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy said.** “Senator Stabenow has shown great leadership and we are grateful that she truly understands the importance of our unique agricultural region and its link to the health of our Great Lakes. Through this award, our region is recognized nationally for its important role in both agricultural and water protection.”

“It’s a new day for protecting water quality and working farms in the northern portion of the West Michigan fruit belt,” **Tom Nelson, executive director of the Leelanau Conservancy said.** “The Leelanau Conservancy is proud to have been given this opportunity to work closely with the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, the Conservation Resource Alliance and the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service and other key partners to preserve the agricultural and water quality resources that are at the epicenter of Northwest Lower Michigan’s economy and quality of life. Simply put, our community owes a deep debt of gratitude to our Senator, Debbie Stabenow, for her dedication to conservation and her leadership in creating the Regional Conservation Partnership Program in the 2014 Farm Bill.”

“At the Conservation Resource Alliance, we view the Regional Conservation Partnership Program as an innovative approach to connecting key Farm Bill programs with locally-designed conservation work,” **Amy Beyer, director of the Conservation Resource Alliance said.** “In the next five years, CRA will work side by side with our tribal and land conservancy partners to restore and protect the most threatened water, land, fishery and wildlife resources in northern Michigan. CRA expects to multiply every conservation dollar invested

and help set the stage for a more streamlined, higher impact, conservation future. As Michiganders, we are proud that our very own Senator Stabenow helped create and launch this program and look forward to showing her the success of our work in the future.”

The project – The Tribal Stream and Michigan Fruitbelt Collaborative – is led by the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, Leelanau Conservancy, the Conservation Resource Alliance. The partnership will leverage public and private funding to work toward long-term restoration and protection of a Tribal fishery as well as address water quality concerns along Lake Michigan. Additionally, the partnership will work with local farmers and producers to protect important farm land in the region and enhance wildlife habitats throughout northwest Michigan.

Since January 2015 when Stabenow first announced funding for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program nationally, more than \$55 million has gone toward land and water conservation efforts in Michigan. More information on those past Regional Conservation Partnership Program projects can be found: [HERE](#).

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