

Six Rivers Land Conservancy Assists Three Communities with Park Acquisitions

Chesterfield Township, Michigan - Six Rivers and Conservancy has helped three local communities secure funding to add 275 acres of additional natural areas and park lands in the region. On Wednesday, December 2 the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) awarded grants totaling \$4.7 million to Chesterfield Township, St. Clair County Parks and Oakland Township to help fund their purchases of properties from Six Rivers. Six Rivers acquired the properties for the communities and is holding them on their behalf while they complete the MNRTF grant process.

Six Rivers acquired property on the Salt River in Chesterfield Township with a loan from First State Bank. Once Chesterfield Township receives their grant funds they will purchase the property from Six Rivers to become the Salt River Nature Center. In the interim period, the Township is leasing the property from Six Rivers to begin utilizing it. Six Rivers' acquisition of the property was funded by First State Bank with a newly established line of credit. Once the MNRTF funds come through, the Township will complete the purchase from Six Rivers and Six Rivers will pay off the loan. This is a priority acquisition for the township as well as a priority in the Macomb County Blueway and SEMCOG Green Infrastructure plans, adding additional access upstream from the Wayne and Joan Webber Paddle Park and adding public access and protected acreage along the Salt River.

In addition to Chesterfield Township, Oakland Township was awarded a grant to add 235 acres to their existing Lost Lake Nature Park. When the grant funds are received the Township will complete the purchase from Six Rivers. The property contains Clam Lake and has a mix of rare, high quality natural features and adds significant habitat value and connectivity to nearby Bald Mountain State Recreation Area and Oakland County's Addison Oaks Park, as well as Oakview Middle School. Six Rivers closed on their acquisition at the end of December. It will be transferred to Oakland Township once the MNRTF grant funds are provided.

Six Rivers also acquired a 10- acre parcel for St. Clair County Parks bordering Algonac and adjoining the DNR boat launch on the North Channel of the St. Clair River. Once the County has received their funds from the MNRTF they will complete the purchase from Six Rivers and turn the property into a public park with beach area, kayak launch and other recreational amenities. It will be the southernmost park in St. Clair County and will add badly needed recreational access to the St. Clair River. The initial acquisition by Six Rivers

was funded with a loan from The Conservation Fund, a national nonprofit that specializes in loaning funds for conservation acquisitions.

One of the ways Six Rivers achieves its mission is to assist local communities in acquiring land for parks and nature preserves. One way Six Rivers does this is by pre-acquiring and holding a property on behalf of the local government while they go through the process of seeking and securing grants and other funding sources to ultimately purchase the property. This is often necessary because in many cases sellers do not have the ability to hold on to the property during the process, which can take many months or more. Six Rivers funds the acquisitions through its partnership with The Conservation Fund and First State Bank as well as other sources. The local community covers all the acquisition and holding costs and pays Six Rivers a facilitation fee for its assistance. Grant funds typically pay up to 75% of the property purchase price, so the additional costs that arise through the partnership are offset by the grant funds, and securing the property is critical to the success of the project.

Six Rivers Land Conservancy is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to conserve, sustain, and connect natural areas, lands and waters that make the places we live special. More information on these projects and the organization can be found at www.sixriversrlc.org.

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