



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Montcalm County Joins West Michigan Strategic Alliance

WEST MICHIGAN—May 15, 2008—It's official: Montcalm County has joined the West Michigan Strategic Alliance (WMSA).

A broad cross-section of Montcalm County leaders, representing the county and local governments as well as business entities, asked WMSA to be included in its efforts last year. The WMSA Board of Directors approved the addition of Montcalm County at its April 2008 meeting. The change took effect May 1, 2008.

"After looking at the economic, governmental and educational links which have been and are being actively courted, it was clear Montcalm County and all of its partners would be a welcome addition to helping us make West Michigan a best place to live, learn, work and play," said Greg Northrup, WMSA President.

According to the 2006 U.S. Census, Montcalm County has nearly 64,000 residents, which is *slightly more than Ionia, Barry, and Newaygo counties that are already part of the WMSA. Montcalm borders three WMSA counties— Ionia, Kent, and Newaygo—and 30 percent of its workforce commutes to neighboring counties. Meanwhile, about 17 percent of people who work in Montcalm commute from those neighboring counties.

"Montcalm County is looking forward to working with the partners of the WMSA to make a positive regional impact," said Chris Hyzer, Montcalm County Controller/ Administrator.

The West Michigan Strategic Alliance was initially formed in 2000 with a focus on Kent, Ottawa, and Muskegon counties. In 2003, when the federal government re-designated the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) to a Combined Statistical Area (CSA), the WMSA regional focus expanded to include Allegan, Barry, Ionia, and Newaygo counties. The addition of Montcalm extends WMSA's collaborative efforts to eight counties.

About the West Michigan Strategic Alliance

The West Michigan Strategic Alliance serves as a catalyst for regional collaboration among the businesses, institutions and governmental units serving slightly less than 1.4 million people living in a eight-county region including: Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo and Ottawa. The WMSA works to encourage a regional mindset, which will foster collaboration on critical issues that impact how we live, learn, work and play. Additional information is available at www.wm-alliance.org.

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