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Fact Sheet Green Infrastructure Initiative

Green Infrastructure Defined: An interconnected network of green space and environmental assets that conserve the functions of natural ecosystems and provide associated benefits to people (*adapted from The Conservation Fund, Mark Benedict and Ed McMahon*).

Examples of Environmental Assets in West Michigan: Wetlands, lakes, rivers and streams, shorelines, dunes, working lands, watersheds, parks, trails, greenways and conserved lands

Need for Green Infrastructure: As development accelerates, we need to *plan for, finance, and maintain* our green infrastructure at the same level of *priority and urgency* with which we plan for, finance, and maintain our “grey” infrastructure (i.e. roads, bridges, buildings, utilities).

Who We Are: The Green Infrastructure Leadership Council (GILC) is made up of representative leadership from conservation organizations, businesses, research institutions, and local government.

When We Started: The Green Infrastructure Initiative came about in response to one of six identified priorities for regional collaboration - “Ensuring a Sustainable Environment” – that WMSA identified in *The Common Framework* (2002). WMSA assembled The Green Infrastructure Task Force to construct a 25-year vision for permanent protection of open space in our region.

What We Do: We provide information and facilitate conversation, cooperation, and collaboration. The 2003 *West Michigan Green Infrastructure Strategy* was updated by the GILC in September 2007, laying out recommended priorities for regional green infrastructure planning and protection and urging support for building regional information and analysis capabilities. Another update is planned for 2010.

Where We Do It: Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo and Ottawa counties

Green Infrastructure Initiative Vision Statement: Provide collaborative leadership in regional efforts that preserve, protect, and restore urban and rural natural features and resources that make up West Michigan’s Green Infrastructure network.

Green Infrastructure Initiative Mission Statement: Encourage and translate best practices in green infrastructure planning to decision-makers and communities; creating, enhancing, and protecting a sustainable green infrastructure network throughout West Michigan.

Our Regional Priorities:

- Protect critical areas of biodiversity
- Protect shoreline and dune ecosystems
- Encourage watershed management and planning
- Promote regional farmland preservation
- Promote a regional trails and greenways network
- Integrate green infrastructure into developed and urban settings