

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**TO:** All Media**FROM:** Grand Traverse Conservation District
1450 Cass Rd
Traverse City, MI 49684**CONTACT:** Jon Prins
Outreach Specialist
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jprins@gtcd.org**DATE:** January 6, 2009**The Grand Traverse Conservation District wins \$200,000 environmental stewardship grant from Great Lakes Fishery Trust**

Traverse City – The Grand Traverse Conservation District (GTCD) has been awarded \$200,000 from the Great Lakes Fishery Trust (GLFT) for a grant under the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (GLSI) that will help K-12 students and teachers work with local organizations to learn about and address environmental issues in the community.

The goal of the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative is to increase awareness and understanding of the ecology of the Great Lakes so that Michigan residents become active stewards and advocates for strategies that support long-term sustainability of the Great Lakes and its fisheries.

This grant will establish and fund the work of the new ***Grand Traverse Stewardship Initiative (GTSI)***, one of only eight regional hubs for the GLSI in Michigan. The hub's work will focus on professional development for teachers, school-community partnerships and place-based education.

"We are excited about the Initiative's potential to bring together teachers, students and community partners to work toward solutions for water-related issues in the Grand Traverse region," said Colleen Masterson-Bzdok, Education Director at the GTCD and Project Manager for the new Initiative. "This combination of meaningful exploration, critical thinking and community service are essential for creating the next generation of environmental stewards."

Leadership for the GTSI will be provided by the GTCD, in partnership with Inland Seas Education Association (ISEA), the Traverse City Area Public Schools (TCAPS), the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District (TBAISD) and over a dozen partner organizations that participated in the planning phase of the Initiative in 2009. The Initiative will compliment many of the GTCD's new education programs at the Boardman River Nature Center.

The Grand Traverse Stewardship Initiative (GTSI) will provide leadership, training and support to help teachers, students and community partners work together on water-related issues in

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the region. The GTSI will focus on cross-curricular teams of teachers in 3-5 target schools at the elementary, middle and high school level for this first 20-month implementation phase. Other K-12 teachers in the region will also benefit by access to professional development workshops and online resources. Professional development will begin in the summer of 2010, with water-related projects being designed and implemented during the 2010-11 school year.

The GTSI is particularly well-suited for the Grand Traverse region, where economic development and quality of life are closely tied with water quality and natural resources, and where community-driven processes like the Grand Vision and Boardman River Dams Project can provide meaningful opportunities to incorporate the work of teachers and students.

The GTCD is currently seeking a Program Coordinator for the GTSI, with applications due on January 11. Please visit www.natureiscalling.org for the vacancy announcement and application procedures.

In addition to the GTCD, other Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (GLSI) grant recipients to date include: Michigan State University; Grand Valley State University; Eastern Michigan University; University of Michigan-Flint; Muskegon Area Intermediate School District; the Western Upper Peninsula Center for Science, Math and Environmental Education, and; the Community Foundation of Northeast Michigan. Combined, nearly 4,200 students, 90 teachers, 30 schools, and 60 community and state organizations have participated in the GLSI to date.

“By changing the way teachers teach and students learn, and engaging local communities in that change, the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative is creating a new, sustainable culture of stewardship,” said GLSI’s Statewide Program Director, Mary Whitmore.

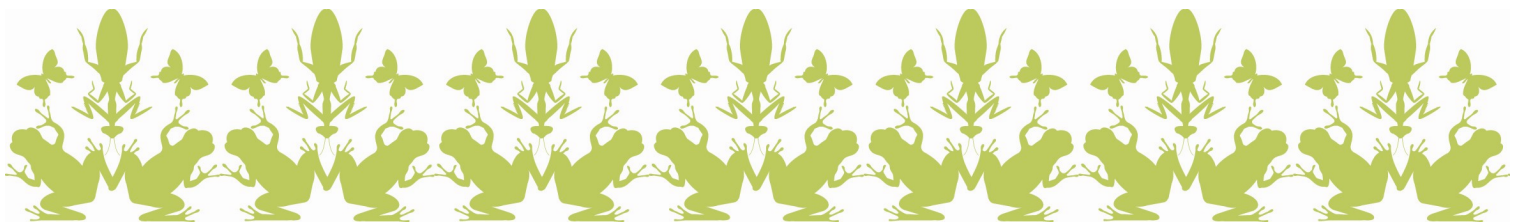
About the Grand Traverse Conservation District

For over 60 years, the Grand Traverse Conservation District (GTCD) has been serving the community to “inspire the exploration, appreciation, and conservation of our natural world.” Helping children and families reconnect with nature through the Boardman River Nature Center, improving parklands and restoring the Boardman River through their Land Management Services team and protecting the quality of our water through the Groundwater Stewardship Program. For more information about the GTCD, please visit the GTCD website: NatureisCalling.org

About the Boardman River Nature Center

Created as a way to help foster the exploration, appreciation and conservation of the natural world, the Boardman River Nature Center has become a destination for the Grand Traverse community to nurture their connection to nature. Inside, the Boardman River Nature Center features an exhibit gallery, nature theater, and activity area for kids. Outside, there are native plant gardens, a demonstration wetland and access to hiking trails in the 505-acre Natural Education Reserve. Nature themed programs for families, children and adults occur regularly on evenings and weekends and custom programs are available for schools and groups. The Nature Center is located at 1450 Cass Rd. just 1.5 miles south of South Airport Rd. in Traverse City and is open to the public on Tuesday - Saturday from 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.

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About the Great Lakes Fishery Trust

The Great Lakes Fishery Trust is a private foundation established in 1996 to mitigate for fish damages caused by the Ludington Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Facility located on Lake Michigan. Since 1998, the GLFT has awarded over \$34 million in grants to 154 projects to enhance the Great Lakes fishery. For more information about the GLFT, please visit the GLFT website at www.glft.org

About the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative

The Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (GLSI) was established by the GLFT with the support of the Wege Foundation and with the advice and counsel of an Advisory Group and the Funders' Collaborative. For more information about the GLSI, please go to the Initiative's website at www.glstewardship.org.

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