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Bringing It Together for the Jordan

PARTNERSHIP & COMMUNITY SUPPORT RESULT IN PROTECTION OF HIGHEST PRIORITY PARCEL

Several northern Michigan conservation groups are celebrating the purchase of what was considered to be the highest priority parcel for protection on the Jordan River. Thanks to a major grant from East Jordan Iron Works, the 40-acre property with more than half a mile of river frontage will be known as the Jordan River Nature Preserve and will be owned by Little Traverse Conservancy.

Located just outside the city of East Jordan, the new preserve is walking distance from downtown and from the local schools. John Richter, President of the Friends of the Jordan, says its location is what put it on the top of the priority list. "Because the land is situated right as you enter the Jordan River system, its development would have been a huge fragmentation," Richter explained. "You rarely get an opportunity to protect such a key piece in a river system."

Richter also noted the land holds a lot of symbolism for the river. "You can stand at the bridge between Lake Charlevoix and the Jordan River and to one side, you see East Jordan Iron Works, the region's largest employer and one reason why our local economy is healthy. Look the other way and you will see the bald eagle nest on the river.

The two can coincide."

Richter's sentiments are echoed by



Happy Holidays!

Joanne Beemon, who has worked on the project for more than 15 years. "What this project exemplifies is man protecting the best of nature. You can see both, living side by side in harmony and in support of each other," Beemon said.

The Jordan River was the first of Michigan's 16 rivers given "Natural River" designation by the Department of Natural Resources, affording it special attention on behalf of the state and its partner organizations. Much of the watershed currently lies in state ownership, and it is one of Michigan's few rivers of this quality and size that has not been dammed. The main stem of the Jordan is 33 miles long with headwaters in northeastern Antrim County. The last several miles of the river broaden into a sedge marsh ecosystem known as "The Spreads." The Spreads, located just downstream of the new preserve, represent a transition between the river and lake habitats. This is a very productive area and is especially important as a fish spawning and nursery area and for water dependent mammals and birds. In addition to the "standard" wetland functions, it provides a buffer for the surrounding landscape from the greatly fluctuating water levels of Lake Charlevoix, which can range nearly six feet due to its connection to Lake Michigan.

Vic Ruggles took the above photo of the Jordan River which won first prize in last summer's photo contest held by Friends of the Jordan.

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Land Protection

Jordan River, continued from cover

More than a decade ago, Conservancy staff began negotiations with a prior owner of the property but an agreement never materialized. Ownership of the land changed hands several times until it was purchased by the Jordan River Development Company. Negotiations for the property began again at that time and in April 2005, the company said it was now ready to sell. The leadership pledge from East Jordan Ironworks started the ball rolling and contributions continued toward the purchase price of \$350,000. The land was formally purchased this past October.

"This is a true community project that never would have happened without the support of both the citizens and the business community," said MaryKay O'Donnell, land protection specialist with Little Traverse Conservancy. "It is clear that the river's magic has worked its way into the hearts of a lot of people here."

Little Traverse Conservancy staff coordinated the fundraising efforts which included securing funds through partner organizations. However, the general consensus is that much of the credit for the land's protection goes to the local grassroots efforts and business supporters that are so strong in the East Jordan region. "I'm a lifelong resident of this area, and I've seen that when a project has validity, you get support," said Cal Diller, a local resident and business owner. "This is a worthwhile project in a great area with huge, lasting effects."

"The Jordan River is one of Michigan's few high quality riverine ecosystems. There are no dams and very little development. There aren't very many like that. It is a globally rare resource."

– **John Richter**
Friends of the Jordan



"Friends of the Jordan's work is so completely from the heart that it appeals to anyone even remotely interested in the Jordan. Their genuineness is a major factor in coordinating the support that this initiative needs. I wish all of our watersheds had a group like FOJ."

– **Todd Vigland**
Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy

"This project exemplifies, in such a beautiful way, that people can live hand in hand with the natural world. The protection of this land allows people – who are responsibly living within a city community – access to the wild."

– **JoAnne Beemon**
Charlevoix Area Land Conservancy



Thoughts from a project donor

Tad Malpass, East Jordan Iron Works

We feel so very fortunate to live and work in such a beautiful area where we are surrounded by Lake Charlevoix, the North Woods, and the Jordan River. We were raised with an appreciation for the natural resources around us and feel so privileged to be able to help preserve an area that can be enjoyed by generations to come. The East Jordan community has been supportive of our business and we feel honored to be able to participate in such an important preservation project with its proximity to the downtown area.

The opportunity for industry to work cooperatively with environmental interests on this is a special thing and is a win win for the community and the entire area. East Jordan is our home and we feel proud to be able to be a small part of a project that will have such a positive outcome for so many years to come. East Jordan has done a good job of recognizing the importance of what we refer to as "Nature Based Tourism," which tries to balance both business and nature interests for the enjoyment and benefit of all.

There is a lot of pride in East Jordan right now and hopefully this project will help add to the growing list of positive things we have going on in our town as we continue to move forward. East Jordan is a great place to live, work, and raise a family and we feel so thankful to be a part of such a wonderful community."