



Media Release

For immediate release – March 4, 2009

From the Ground Up: Four Farm Families Take the Lead in Permanently Protecting Acme Township's Agricultural Resources

At their regular board meeting on March 3, 2009, the Acme Township Board adopted resolutions to purchase conservation easements on 184 acres of farmland and secure option agreements for future purchases of conservation easements over an additional 490 acres in the township. Additionally, the township passed a motion to extend an offer to purchase a conservation easement on another 135 acres of farmland. In total, the township committed to pursue preservation of over 800 acres of the township's critical farmland resources.

These properties, owned by the Send, Saylor, Engle and Veliquette families, span from the township's Yuba Creek Natural Area adjacent to US -31 all the way to the Petobago Creek watershed to the east. Protection of these lands will contribute to over 1,000 acres of public and private land conservation already permanently preserved in Acme Township.

In 2004, the voters of Acme Township passed a one mill – 10 year property tax increase to fund their farmland preservation program. Modeled after the long standing and enormously successful farmland preservation program in Peninsula Township and the State of Michigan's own Farmland Preservation Program, together with hundreds of other such programs around the country, the program is geared toward creating a long-term business environment for agriculture in the township. The voluntary program works by compensating landowners for the value of some or all of their residential development rights in exchange for a permanent conservation restriction, commonly called a conservation easement, that runs with the land regardless of future ownership. This in turn reduces residential development in farming areas where noise, pesticide and fertilizer application and other farming activities are often a source of conflict with non-farm neighbors. The funds the landowners receive from these transactions provide another tool for making sure the land can be successfully transferred to the next generation and are most often reinvested in the farm operations. "We plan to invest the capital from this sale right back into our business to expand our farming enterprise." said Ken Engle who has already restricted another portion of his farm through the Wetland Reserve Program of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

"These four families are true leaders who have shown tremendous dedication to the future of farming in Acme Township and along the US-31 corridor," said Brian Bourdages, Farmland Protection Specialist for the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy who assists the township with the program's administration, "Their

leadership is going to make a lasting impact on the future success of agriculture and the face of our landscape in our region.”

The initial purchases of development rights authorized by the township – 75 acres of the Send Brothers Farm and 109 acres of Engle Ridge Farms, both along Bates Road between Brackett and Yuba Road – were made possible in part by generous donations of value from the farm families themselves. As the program moves forward, the township anticipates that its millage dollars will position it well for matching funds from the new 2008 Farm Bill and other sources.

“As our manufacturing sector declines in Michigan, we must do all we can to shore up our land-based industries like agriculture which have for too long been taken for granted,” said Wayne J. Kladder, Acme Township’s Supervisor, “together with our township’s efforts to open up our shoreline to the public, and our long history of protecting the township’s unique natural lands, the protection of our high quality farmlands will create a strong foundation for a thriving and growing agricultural and tourism sector in the township and across the region.”

###

For more information contact:

Brian Bourdages
Farmland Protection Specialist
Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy
231-929-7911
brian@gtrlc.org

Wayne J. Kladder
Supervisor
Acme Township
231-938-1350