

Press Release
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Conservation Partnership Creates Nature Preserve on Lake Erie Island

Middle Bass Island, OH (August 19, 2010) A partnership of conservation organizations has created a 7.8-acre nature preserve on Middle Bass Island, Ohio, in Lake Erie.

The participating organizations include the Black Swamp Conservancy and its Lake Erie Islands Chapter, the Put-in-Bay Township Park District and The Trust for Public Land (TPL).

The island property—with extensive migratory bird habitat and a large population of the Lake Erie watersnake—was threatened with development for residential and vacation homes.

“Our residents and the members of the Put-in-Bay Township Park District board recognize the need to protect crucial, environmentally sensitive land in the islands. The Middle Bass Island Preserve will protect such land in perpetuity,” stated Kelly Faris, chairman of the Put-in-Bay Township Park District board of commissioners.

“This preserve's position on the tip of the island and its wooded shores make it a great resting spot for migratory birds. The rocky beachfront and shallow waters not only provide habitat for the Lake Erie watersnake, a threatened species, but also protect an important potential habitat for rare plants and native mussels,” said Lisa Brohl, chair of the Lake Erie Islands Chapter of Black Swamp Conservancy.

“Our island conservancy is so happy to assist in protecting this lakefront property,” Ms. Brohl added.

TPL spearheaded the acquisition of the property, working closely with the conservancy and the park district. The park district owns the land and will manage the property as a nature preserve and kayak park.

“This is a very special project. It was the last and best opportunity to permanently protect a significant portion of the eastern point of Middle Bass Island for future generations. It will make a wonderful nature preserve and kayak park,” said Bill Carroll, TPL's Ohio state director.

Black Swamp Conservancy, through its islands chapter, and the park district will have a perpetual land conservation agreement that will prevent the property from ever being subdivided or developed. The conservancy and its islands chapter will assist the park district with natural resource restoration and land management.

The preserve is not yet open to the public. Access will be allowed after areas of the site have been restored and recreation improvements completed.

“Black Swamp Conservancy helps create healthier communities, conserve ecosystems and support economic sustainability through land conservation,” said Kevin Joyce, the conservancy's executive director. “We're truly excited about the new Middle Bass Island Preserve because it helps us accomplish each of these three important goals for the benefit of island residents and visitors.”

Funding for the purchase included \$844,000 from the Clean Ohio Fund, \$70,000 from the Ohio Land and Water Conservation Fund, and \$70,000 from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Coastal Management Assistance Grant program. Additional financial support was provided by the Lake Erie Protection Fund, Ohio Ornithological Society, Frost-Parker Foundation of Sandusky, Friends of Magee Marsh, Firelands Audubon, and many private donors.

“TPL would also like to thank the estate of Theodore Swartz for patience while funding for the purchase was being assembled and for their commitment to a conservation outcome for Middle Bass Island,” said Mr. Carroll.

“We have been extremely fortunate to work with the Lake Erie Islands Chapter of the Black Swamp Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land to secure this area and preserve and protect it,” stated Mr. Faris, the park district chairman.

The Trust for Public Land is a national, nonprofit, land conservation organization that conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, community gardens, historic sites, rural lands and other natural places, ensuring livable communities for generations to come. Learn more at: www.tpl.org/ohio.

The Put-in-Bay Township Park District, a local government entity created by a citizens’ referendum in 2006, serves seven islands in the western basin of Lake Erie. The park district strives to complement residential and commercial development with areas of green space that preserve the natural heritage of the islands.

Black Swamp Conservancy is a nonprofit land conservation organization whose mission is to protect and preserve farmland and natural areas in northwest Ohio. Learn more at: www.blackswamp.org. The conservancy’s Lake Erie Islands Chapter focuses its conservation efforts on natural and agricultural lands in the Lake Erie islands. Learn more at: <http://lakeerieislandsbsc.com>.

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