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Local Land Trust Hosts Great Lake Gathering in Mequon
Open Forum Will Focus on Protecting Region's Natural Treasures

Mequon, WI, September 29, 2008 – Mequon area residents will soon have an opportunity to meet with Wisconsin's Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Secretary Rod Nilsestuen, Mequon Mayor Christine Nuernberg, economic development leaders, environmental experts, and others about preserving and improving the ecological, economic and human health of Lake Michigan, their neighborhoods and the region. The Ozaukee Washington Land Trust and Gathering Waters Conservancy will co-host a Great Lake Gathering -- an open forum focusing on protecting land and water resources in southeast Wisconsin.

The Great Lake Gathering will be held **October 8th at the Mequon Nature Preserve, from 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.** It will include opening remarks by Mayor Nuernberg, a keynote address by Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Secretary Rod Nilsestuen, and a panel discussion with local leaders on ways to protect natural resources and enhance the quality of life in the region. Tours of the Mequon Nature Preserve will also be held from 4 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

This is one of four Great Lake Gatherings being held this fall in Green Bay, Sheboygan, Mequon and Milwaukee. The Gatherings are designed to bring together area land trusts and economic development leaders, policy makers, business owners, landowners and residents to discuss conservation priorities and encourage new collaborative efforts to address these priorities.

"We are excited about this upcoming Gathering," says Shawn Graff, Executive Director of the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust. "We have a very diverse group of experts and community leaders coming to talk about land conservation, and we also want to expand everyone's understanding about our Land Trust and its role for the whole region. Hopefully, we can begin new discussions and work together to protect our area's land and water resources for future generations."

Keynote speaker Rod Nilsestuen, as the Secretary of Wisconsin's Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, has led the charge to preserve Wisconsin's working agricultural and forest lands. According to Nilsestuen, "this Gathering will be an opportunity to discuss the ways we can join together to preserve our land. I have seen how groups of leaders with a shared interest in keeping Wisconsin's working lands in production and healthy can make a lasting, positive impact on our state. This forum is an ideal way to share these true stories and creative ideas with a larger audience."

Panelists will include Tony Warren, president of West Bend Mutual Insurance Company; Marcus White, director of Community Partnerships with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation; Shawn Graff, executive director of Ozaukee Washington Land Trust; and Claus Dunkelberg, water

industry specialist with Milwaukee 7 Water Council. They will share stories of special places already protected and the creative partnerships responsible for those conservation successes.

“Many people share a common love for the natural treasures in the Lake Michigan Basin. The Great Lake Gatherings will introduce participants to new partners who are working to protect our shared back yard,” says Michael Strigel, executive director of Gathering Waters Conservancy. “We will connect local land trusts with community leadership -- key businesses, elected officials, civic organizations and involved citizens.”

The other Great Lake Gatherings being held this fall throughout Wisconsin’s Lake Michigan Basin are:

- **Green Bay - already held on September 16, 2008, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m., University of Wisconsin-Green Bay** Hosted by the *Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust and Baird Creek Preservation Foundation*
- **Sheboygan - October 1, 2008, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m., John Michael Kohler Arts Center.** Hosted by the *Glacial Lakes Conservancy*
- **Milwaukee - October 15, 2008, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m., Milwaukee Art Museum.** Hosted by the *River Revitalization Foundation and the Milwaukee Area Land Conservancy*

The Gatherings are made possible through support from Joyce Foundation, WI Department of Natural Resources, Argosy Foundation, Brico Fund, Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, Wisconsin Energy Foundation, West Bend Mutual Insurance, Harris Bank and many others.

For more information and registration, please visit: www.greatlakegatherings.org. There is no charge to attend and the Gatherings are open to the public. All attendees will receive a “toolkit” of information and resources to inspire them to begin implementing new conservation projects in their own backyards and in their communities.

About Ozaukee Washington Land Trust:

Ozaukee Washington Land Trust was founded in 1992 by a group of Ozaukee County residents concerned about the excessive growth and the rapid loss of our natural areas, farmland and open spaces. The Trust offers services to property owners and communities throughout Ozaukee and Washington Counties in the areas of land conservation, education and stewardship. Since 1992, more than 2600 acres of forests, wetlands and open space have been protected through acquisition and conservation easements.

About Gathering Waters Conservancy:

Gathering Waters Conservancy is a statewide service center for Wisconsin’s land trust community and works to increase the amount of protected land in the state through private voluntary action. Gathering Waters strengthens Wisconsin’s private, non-profit land trusts through consulting, public education and policy advocacy.

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