



Huron Pines

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Subject: BREAKING NEWS for the Au Sable River

Grayling -- The local community of Grayling and all those who love the Au Sable River just got a big shot in the arm Wednesday, as the state of Michigan's Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) Board approved \$3.1 million in funding for the acquisition of 1,020 acres on the Upper Au Sable River, just south of Frederic.

The parcel has been owned by the Maghielse family for more than 70 years, as they enjoyed it for the hunting and fishing opportunities it provided to generations of family and friends. As they grew older, they had been looking to sell the unique piece of land to the State so that it could be protected forever and enjoyed by other families and outdoor enthusiasts of Michigan.

The land is bordered to the north and south by DNR owned properties—making it an important piece for linking together protected natural lands, maintaining healthy wildlife populations and protecting the high quality waters of the Au Sable River. The land includes more than a mile of Au Sable River and some stands of old growth forest that rival nearby Hartwick Pines.

“The public truly is the beneficiary when a project like this gets approved, as it will be available to us all for generations to come,” Huron Pines Executive Director Brad Jensen noted.

“We give a lot of credit to Crawford County, Frederic Township, the Grayling Chamber of Commerce and many other businesses and conservation partners for having the foresight to support this land protection project. It has a high natural resources value for fish and wildlife and will add to the recreational values that attract people to live in and visit the area,” he added.

The [Natural Resources Trust Fund](#) is dedicated for land acquisition and park development projects around the state. It is funded by oil & gas extraction revenues off of State lands.

When a land purchase occurs through this program, the State of Michigan makes an annual Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) on the property. PILT is distributed to the County, who then distributes 50% of the payment to the Township. On land acquired with MNRTF grants, 100% of the PILT payment is made from MNRTF, which is a constitutionally protected fund.

When Huron Pines developed the original, state-approved watershed management plan for the Au Sable, 15 years ago, long-term land protection was ranked as a top priority. Back then it wasn't thought possible that a high quality family-owned property of over 1,000 acres would be available to add to the public trust. It was important that leaders of the state support this opportunity, as it might be the last privately owned parcel of this size and quality available.

A development projection showed that this parcel could eventually get split into smaller private parcels, not available for the public to enjoy. To the south, on the east half of the river, similar land was broken into 10-acre sections held by different landowners. It's very difficult to protect wildlife populations and manage forests once land becomes fragmented that way. Protecting and managing the larger natural areas is a big part of what attracts people to enjoy northern Michigan values.



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Some local companies encouraging the project, like M&M Excavating, even noted that conservation efforts like this make it easier for them to attract and retain employees in northern Michigan as it is what their employees want to have near where they live and work.

Now that the MNRTF Board of Trustees has recommended this project for funding the request goes before Michigan's Legislature for approval and appropriation of funds. It is important to note that the property is still privately owned and not open to the public until the legislature allocates funds and the property is closed on, which could likely happen in fall of 2017. Once that is complete the Department of Natural Resources will develop a management plan through a public input process.

Huron Pines is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and equal opportunity provider with a mission to protect the Great Lakes by conserving the forests, lakes and streams of Northeast Michigan. Huron Pines believes that through active leadership and coordination of conservation projects, we make the region a better place to live, work and enjoy.



The Maghielse Property is surrounded by state land and is an important parcel to connect those lands.



The old growth stands of forest on the property will provide excellent recreation opportunities.

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