STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT
LANSING

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

REBECCA A. HUMPHRIES
DIRECTOR

November 8, 2010

TO: Rebecca A. Humphries, Director

INFORMATION: Natural Resources Commission

Transaction: Gift of Land – State Forest Trail
Fred Meijer Flat River Valley Rail-Trail
Kent, Ionia, and Montcalm Counties
Land Transaction Case #20100265

Description: 261.60 acres (21.88 linear miles) Kent County, Lowell Township, T06N, R09W, Sections 2 and 3, and Vergennes Township, T07N, R09W, Sections 34, 27, 22, 15, 10, 3 and 2, and Grattan Township, T08N, R09W, Sections 35 and 36; Ionia County, Otisco Township, T08N, R08W, Sections 31, 32, 29, 28, 24, 22, 15, 10, 11, 2 and 1; and Montcalm County, Eureka Township, T09, R08W, Sections 36, 35, 26, 23, 22 and 15: as more completely described in "Exhibit A" contained in the project file.

Donor: Friends of the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail (FFMHT), a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, Edmore, Michigan

Special Conditions: 1. Preservation of the Railroad Corridor through provisions of federal law, Section 8(d) of the National Trails Act, 16 U.S.C. 1247 (d).

2. Deed restrictions prohibiting equestrian and motorized use on the gifted property.

Reservations: Subject to pre-existing leasehold rights conveyed by the railroad, and any easements of record.

Property Taxes: Not applicable to a non-profit corporation.

Authority: Part 5 of Act 451, Public Acts of 1994, as amended

Notice: This item will appear on the Department's November 22, 2010 Calendar, and is eligible for approval on November 29, 2010.

Comments: The offered 261.60 acres consists of an inactive railroad corridor, known as the "Fred Meijer Flat River Valley Rail-Trail." It is the second of two acquisitions by the FFMHT, a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, organized in 1994 to establish a recreational trail using former railroad rights-of-ways in Montcalm and Gratiot Counties. The FFMHT expanded its role in this instance to include Kent and Ionia Counties, when the operating railroad indicated its plans to abandon two rail corridors.

The FFMHT purchased the corridor between Lowell and Ionia in 2008. Known as the "Fred Meijer Grand Valley Rail-Trail," the trail was offered to the Department in two phases, which were approved at the August 13, 2009, and the January 7, 2010 meetings of the Natural Resources Commission.

The FFMHT has now purchased the corridor between Lowell and Greenville and offered the property as a gift to the Department. The property, with water frontage and spectacular views, parallels the Flat River as it extends northerly 21.88 miles from a point near the northern edge of the City of Lowell, passing through the City of Belding and the Flat River State Game Area, to a point south of M-57 in the City of Greenville. The FFMHT had the corridor surveyed prior to removal of the tracks and ties.

The south end of the offered property is approximately two miles from the west end of the "Fred Meijer Grand Valley Rail-Trail." The Lowell Area Recreation Authority is working to develop a route to connect the two trails through the City of Lowell.

At the north end of the offered property, the FFMHT intends to donate the "Fred Meijer Heartland Trail" to the Department at a future date. After additional trail development work in 2011, the nearly 45-mile long trail will have a paved surface along its entire length from Greenville to Alma. When donated, it will be the last piece to what is being called the "Mid-West Michigan Trail Network." At 125 miles, it will be the fifth longest rail-trail in the United States.

The offered property is "railbanked" under federal transportation railbanking authority. Under federal statutory railbanking provisions, the proposed acquisition will protect the integrity of the trail corridor for future railroad use while providing for interim recreational trail use.

Recommendations:

(1) That the gift of the 21.88 miles of corridor be accepted, subject to the condition that equestrian and motorized vehicle use is not allowed.

(2) That closing shall not occur until:
- (a) Tracks and ties are removed.
- (b) A satisfactory Environmental Assessment is completed.

(3) That this gift, and the ongoing and tireless efforts of the FFMHT to significantly expand and promote a growing Michigan trail network, be recognized with appreciation.

(4) That the lands described above be acquired for use as a Michigan Trailway and designated as such when the legislated requirements are met, pursuant to Part 721 of Act 451, Public Acts of 1994, as amended.

(5) That the property be dedicated for public use in perpetuity as the Fred Meijer Flat River Valley Rail-Trail and administered by the Forest Management Division in partnership with the Mid-West Michigan Trail Authority, and that the DNRE offer a lease to the Authority for development, management, and maintenance of the rail-trail.

James M. Kasprzak, Chief
Administration Division

Lynne M. Boyd, Chief
Forest Management Division

Russ Mason, Ph.D., Chief
Wildlife Division

Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Recreation Division

Kelley D. Smith, Ph.D., Chief
Fisheries Division

Mindy Koch, Deputy Director
Resource Management

Frank Ruswick, Deputy Director
Stewardship

I approve the staff recommendations.

Rebecca A. Humphries
Director

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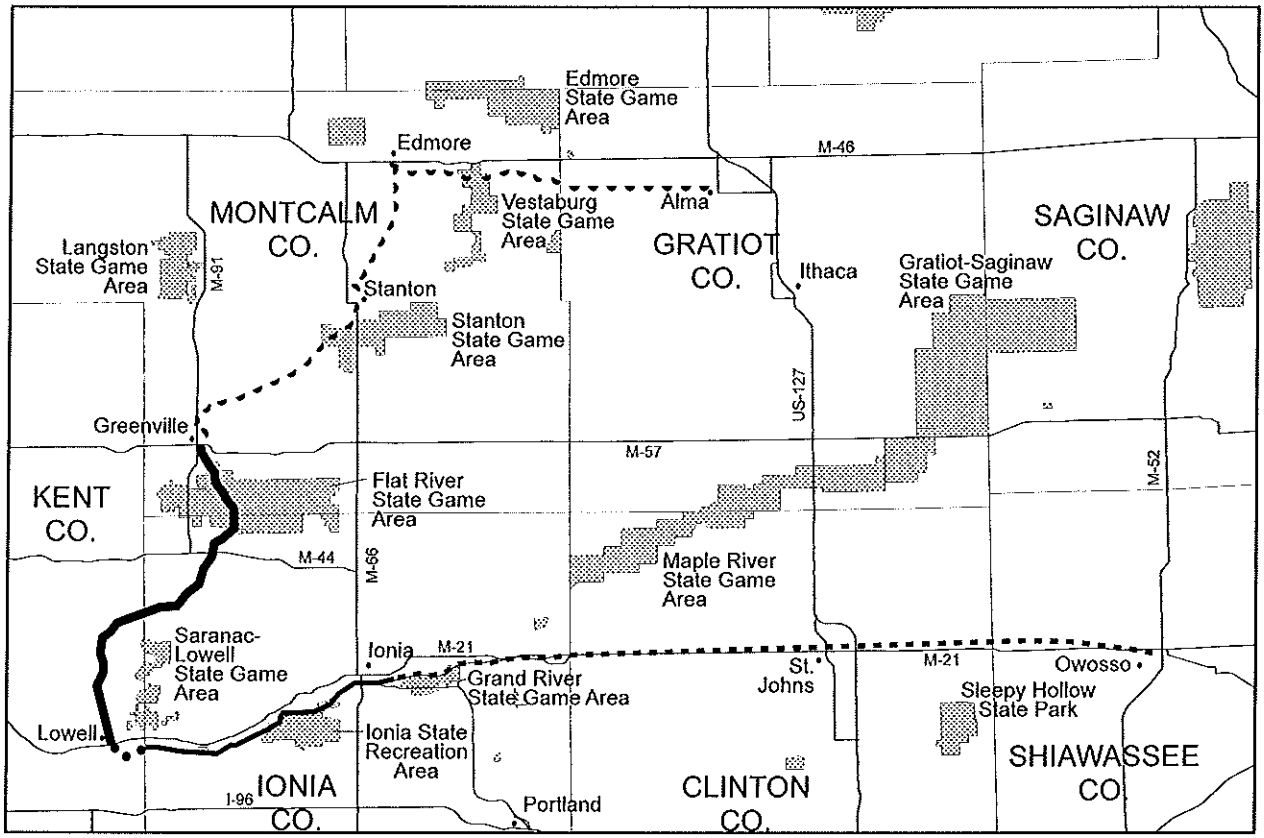
Date Approved

GIFT OF LAND
Fred Meijer Flat River Valley Rail-Trail
Kent, Ionia and Montcalm Counties
Land Transaction Case #20100265



Proposed gift of unimproved Fred Meijer Flat River Valley Rail-Trail (21.88 miles, 261.60 acres)

Proposed future gift of improved Fred Meijer Heartland Trail

Fred Meijer Grand River Valley Rail-Trail

Ionia to Owosso Trail

Future local connector trail

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