



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, January 14, 2015

Contact:

Melissa Molenda, The Nature Conservancy
(517) 230-0818 or mmolenda@tnc.org

Chuck Lippstreu, Michigan Agri-Business Association
(517) 242-5124 or clippstreu@byrumfisk.com

**The Nature Conservancy and Michigan Agri-Business
Association Move Forward with Innovative Water Quality
Partnership in Michigan's Saginaw Bay Watershed**
USDA announces funding for Saginaw Bay RCPP Proposal

LANSING, Mich. — Leaders from The Nature Conservancy and Michigan Agri-Business Association (MABA) today hailed an announcement by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack that the Saginaw Bay Watershed Conservation Partnership was selected to receive \$10 million in funding under the new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), which was created under the 2014 Farm Bill.

“Today’s action will magnify our ability to communicate the benefits of conservation to growers across the watershed,” said Helen Taylor, state director of Michigan for The Nature Conservancy. “This is an important step forward to accelerate the restoration of Saginaw Bay.”

“There’s no quick fix on water quality, but this new public-private partnership under RCPP in the Saginaw Bay Watershed represents an important first step,” said Jim Byrum, president of MABA. “Protecting and improving water quality in the Saginaw Bay will take time, effort, and creativity. We look forward to working with The Nature Conservancy, Michigan State University and all the partners involved in this innovative effort.”

The Saginaw Bay Partnership represents a unique collaboration between conservation organizations, agronomy retailers, higher education institutions, commodity groups, agribusinesses and state and federal agencies. The partnership will aim to shift the paradigm in the field of on-farm conservation by putting innovative conservation tools, developed by Conservancy and Michigan State University scientists, into the hands of Certified Crop Advisors and agronomy retailers throughout the Saginaw Bay Watershed.

Both leaders reiterated their appreciation for U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, for her efforts to champion final passage of the 2014 Farm Bill and her leadership in developing the RCPP.

Under the program, crop advisors will have new tools to directly assist their Saginaw Bay and Thumb area customers in accessing funding for on-farm conservation to implement critical conservation practices.

Additional details will be forthcoming as The Nature Conservancy and MABA work together with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to convene partners and move the project forward.

Sponsors of the new program include:

- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
- Star of the West Milling Co.
- Crop Production Services
- Helena Chemical Co.
- Wilbur Ellis
- Co-op Elevator Co.
- Michigan Sugar Co.
- Michigan Milk Producers Association
- The Andersons
- Dow AgroSciences, LLC
- POET-Caro Biorefining
- Method Products, PBC
- Cook Family Foundation
- Americana Foundation

Partners in the new program include:

- Michigan State University-Institute of Water Research
- Michigan Agricultural Commodities
- Brown Milling
- Ducks Unlimited
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Delta Institute
- Kellogg Company
- Agri Drain Corporation
- Ecosystem Services Exchange, Inc.
- Mondelēz International, Inc.
- Syngenta
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)

The Nature Conservancy is the leading conservation organization working to protect the most ecologically important lands and waters around the world for nature and people. To date, the Conservancy and its 1 million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 120 million acres worldwide, including more than 371,000 acres in Michigan. The Nature

Conservancy is working to make the Great Lakes watershed among the most effectively managed ecosystems on Earth. For more information, visit <http://nature.org/michigan>.

The Michigan Agri-Business Association (MABA) represents more than 400 agribusinesses, including crop input suppliers, agronomy companies and others across the scope of Michigan agriculture. The Association has led efforts to ensure Michigan's agriculture sector is proactive on water quality issues and helps to lead the way on protecting and improving our Great Lakes. Additional information is available at www.miagbiz.org.

#