SLIDES: Coolbough Natural Areas: Community Forest, Brooks Township, Michigan

Dale Block

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Outline of topics:

- Newaygo County vitals
- Brooks Township natural features
- *Brooks Township Land Use Vision*: an example of community-based planning
- Coolbough Natural Areas – Community Forest
Area population growth

(1990-2000) Source: U.S. Census Bureau

- U.S. grew 13.2%
- Michigan grew 6.9%
- Newaygo County grew 25.3%
- Brooks Township grew 34.6%
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Brooks Township, Michigan

Hess Lake
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Muskegon River
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Coolbough Natural Areas
Mission statement

To serve township citizens while protecting the environment and our way of life

Adopted Mar 26, 1997
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Brooks Township, Michigan

LUV Participants
- Brooks Township residents & landowners
- Hess, Brooks & Emerald/ Sylvan Lake Associations
- Grand Valley State University
- MDEQ Surface Water Division
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- MDNR Forest Management Division
- Timberland R.C. & D.
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**LUV Participants (cont’d)**

- Michigan Nature Association
- Newaygo Conservation District
- The Nature Conservancy
- Michigan Natural Features Inventory
- Brooks Township Planning Commission
- Brooks Township Board
Initial Public Meetings

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March 28, 1998
Committees (Areas of concern)

- Rivers, Lakes, Wetlands
- Forests, Prairies, Barrens
- Trash & Recreational Impacts

June 2005 Conference
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Trash in National Forest
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- Process
  - Targets
  - Threats
  - Strategies
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- **Desired outcomes**
  - Create ecological map
  - Organize cadre of committed residents
  - Further relationship between local government and conservation partners
  - Document process as template for replication
Summary of recommendations (72)

- Community Education (27)
- Voluntary participation of landowners (17)
- Regulatory strategies
- Land management
- Miscellaneous
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Leverage

- $60,000 in grants from Fremont Area Community Foundation for implementation
- $667,000 grant from Michigan DNR Recreation Trust Fund for Coolbough Natural Areas
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- **Keys to success**
  - Shared vision & shared values
  - Cultivate desire to participate & sense of community
  - Professional & non-threatening communicators
  - Respect:
    - Differences of opinion
    - Property rights
    - Livelihood or investment
  - “Market” function of local government
  - Celebrate achievements
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400 acre
Coolbough
Natural Areas
Property Description

- White pine-white oak forests
- Remnants of dry sand prairie
- Coolbough and Bigelow Creek trout streams
- 3.5 acre pond
- 7 acres of wetlands
Natural Resources Protection

- Rare plant communities: white pine-white oak forests & dry sand prairies
- Federally endangered Karner blue butterfly
- State threatened: Great Plains spittlebug, Ottoe skipper & Persius dusky butterflies, red-shouldered hawk & prairie smoke
- State special concern: wood turtle and frosted elfin & Henry’s elfin butterflies
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**Property Acquisition**

- **Elements of cost totaling $889k**
  - 320 acre Koetje tract appraised at $700k
  - 80 acre existing TNC tract appraised at $140k (donated & applied toward minimum 25% local match)
  - $49k in associated purchase costs

- **Michigan DNR Recreation Trust Fund Grant of $667k (75% of $889k project costs)**

- **Cash balance by TNC**

- **Result: Brooks Township acquired 400 acres of environmentally significant land with no money paid or owed!**
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**Property Management**

- Binding *Management Agreement* between Brooks Township and The Nature Conservancy
  - Description of permitted & prohibited uses
  - Master Plan for development/improvements
  - Defined role of each partner

- Property management by an *Environmental Commission* with representation from:
  - The Nature Conservancy (2)
  - Brooks Township (2)
  - U.S. Forest Service (1)
  - Land Conservancy of W Michigan (1)
  - At-large (1)
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Capital Improvements

- Initial funding of $17k in 2002
  - Brooks Township
  - The Nature Conservancy
  - Friends of Coolbough Natural Areas &
  - Matching funds from Fremont Area Community Foundation

- Brooks Township $5k/yr and TNC with in-kind and management costs

Improvements

- Signage
- Hiking paths
- Bridle paths
- Parking lot
- Barriers to motorized vehicles
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Contact information

Dale Black, Supervisor
Brooks Township
490 Quarterline Rd
POB 625
Newaygo, MI 49337

E-mail: gdb828@riverview.net
Website: www.brookstownship.org