City Council Agenda Item Report

FROM: Ryan Cummins, City Manager

MEETING DATE: December 17, 2025

SUBJECT: Request for Letter of Support – Allegan Conservation District MCMP Grant Application

DESCRIPTION:

The Allegan Conservation District (ACD) has requested a letter of support for its application to the Michigan Coastal Management Program (MCMP) grant program administered by EGLE. The grant proposal focuses on forest mortality mitigation and prevention planning in Allegan County's coastal areas, including work that could involve municipally owned properties.

Attached is a project brief.

At this stage, the Allegan Conservation District is not requesting a financial match or formal commitment from the City. Instead, they are seeking a general letter of support indicating the City's willingness to engage in discussions and collaborate on the project should grant funding be awarded.

City Council has identified treating invasive species as a priority and the ACD's grant application is a collaborative approach that aligns with that work.

LEGAL REVIEW:

Legal will be at your meeting if you have any questions.

SAMPLE MOTION:

Motion to approve the letter of support for the Allegan Conservation District MCMP grant application.

ALLEGAN CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Allegan Conservation District is dedicated to helping all land users wisely manage the natural resources of Allegan County

Project Brief

Name: Forest Mortality Mitigation and Prevention Planning in Allegan County
Funding: Michigan Coastal Management Program grant
Duration: January 2027 – January 2028

Need: A number of tree species that are significant coastal forest components are at risk of widespread mortality caused by invasive species. Eastern Hemlock is threatened by Hemlock Woolly Adelgid which is widespread in Allegan County; American Beech is threatened by Beech Leaf Disease and Beech Bark Disease which are present in Michigan, but yet not in Allegan County; and species of the red oak taxonomic group are threatened by Oak Wilt which is present in Allegan County. Land managers must be prepared to address the threats of mass mortality which can be caused by these invasive species, especially in coastal areas susceptible to erosion. This must be done through forest management planning through which managers will determine when to pay for prevention and treatment measures, or when they will instead allow tree mortality and implement mitigation measures to prevent erosion, reduce hazards from falling trees, and maintain habitat.

Summary: Conservation district staff will support the early stages of forest management planning by engaging land managers, collecting the necessary data to inform planning efforts, and connecting managers with forestry professionals to complete management plans. The activities will complete the majority of groundwork necessary to create forest management plans—allowing municipalities to get more accurate cost estimates for planning services and reducing the total time and cost necessary to complete the work.

Tasks:

- Adapt/develop and distribute educational materials covering:
    - tree ID, habitat preference, and importance of target species;
    - disease/pest life cycle and impacts;
    - management practices to prevent invasion, treat pests, and mitigate impacts of tree mortality.
- Develop contractor list for forest planning and treatment services.
- Inventory and map Hemlock, Beech, or red oaks on publicly owned parcels.
- Engage municipalities in initial forest management plan discussions.

December 22, 2025

To whom it may concern:

The City of Saugatuck extends this letter of support for the Allegan Conservation District's project submission to the Michigan Coastal Management Program funding opportunity. The proposal lays the necessary foundation for proactive forest management planning to mitigate the impacts of forest pests which are currently present or likely to become present in the near future. This work is especially necessary in Allegan County's coastal forests which support many unique ecosystems and species, provide critical soil stabilization services, and provide significant economic value through recreational opportunities.

The City of Saugatuck will allow Conservation District staff to complete forest inventory work on our properties. We will support this project by distributing educational materials, and engage in planning discussions utilizing the inventory data.

This project provides a proactive approach to ensuring the health of our coastal forests, and we encourage the funding of this important work.

Sincerely,

Ryan Cummins
City Manager