



**STATEMENT REGARDING GIFT OF PESHEKEE HEADWATERS NATURE PRESERVE
TO STATE OF MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
FOR EXPANSION OF CRAIG LAKE STATE PARK**

March 8th, 2022

“On earth there is no heaven, but there are pieces of it.” – Jules Renard

The DNR and UPLC share similar missions: *we both protect land today for life tomorrow, for our community.* We are pleased to work alongside the DNR in our mutual mission by expanding Craig Lake State Park with the gift of nearly 1,300 acres of land, currently known as our Peshekee Headwaters Nature Preserve.

The current Preserve is adjacent to state-owned land on three sides and is connected to Craig Lake State Park via an established trail. The gift and transfer will assist in accomplishing two specific DNR land management goals: it will consolidate state ownership, making the management process easier, and expand recreational offerings within Craig Lake State Park. Continued permanent protection of the biological resources will be ensured through a perpetual Conservation Easement that will be transferred along with Preserve. Further, the public recreational use of the Preserve will be continued as part of the State Park’s recreational plans. The expansion of the Park will provide an opportunity for the local community to bring further attention to the phenomenal recreational assets of the township and enhance both local and visitor experience of the State Park.

The three parcels that make up the Peshekee Headwaters Nature Preserve are contiguous to the State Park and contain nearly 90% of the watershed that fills Indian Lake, which is the headwaters of the West Branch of the Peshekee River. The watershed, lake, and river are a source of freshwater that provides healthy drinking water and fish to eat, provides many kinds of recreation for the community and visitors, and supports healthy forest ecosystems downstream. Michigan Department of Natural Resources is the best partner in the continued protection of this incredible freshwater resource given the work they already do to protect forests and fresh waters in the Peshekee River Watershed and surrounding region.

The proposed expansion of land, lake, and trails provides a remarkable recreational and biological asset open for public benefit in a remote natural setting. The proposed gift is 1,297 acres of pristine, archetypal Michigamme Highlands wilderness; the diverse habitat ranges from a steep-sloped old growth hemlock forest with exposed granite bedrock glades, to the island-dotted eutrophic lake ringed by super-canopy white pines. It is home to a healthy moose population, black bears, eagles, loons and other threatened, rare, and special animals and plants including the carnivorous English Spatulated Sundew plant (*drosera anglica*). There are currently 4.5 miles of established trails within the preserve, including the 1.5 mile long Partnership Trail and trailhead established in 2019, which connects the parcels to the State Park for public recreation and access. Consolidating the ownership of these adjacent properties reduces resource and infrastructure costs for both parties and allows the DNR and UPLC to work together in other capacities in pursuit of our mutual goals.



The Upper Peninsula Land Conservancy protects and conserves over 60 properties, in 12 Upper Peninsula counties, that are home to irreplaceable forest canopies, clean waters and wildlife habitats. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, UPLC relies on low-land tax or tax-exempt programs from municipalities, townships and counties who value the conservation efforts the organization brings to the protected lands in their communities. Partnerships with other nonprofit and government organizations with similar missions allow us to maintain the wild nature of the Preserve while providing public access to natural areas. Michigamme Township's tax burden placed on the Peshekee Headwaters Nature Preserve is tens of thousands of dollars higher than any other property that UPLC owns. This tax burden drains resources UPLC needs to carry on the protection and conservation of the 6,500 acres protected by the organization across the Upper Peninsula. UPLC is giving the Preserve to The Michigan Department of Natural Resources to guarantee permanent environmental protection and public recreational access of this property while solving the tax burden issue. The DNR and UPLC share similar missions and values and the DNR, having the infrastructure to care for the Park already at hand, will be able to seamlessly provide a robust land management support system to help the rare ecosystem flourish.

UPLC Board and Staff are excited to partner with the DNR to expand Craig Lake State Park, ensure the permanent protection of this amazing headwaters lake, and continue providing public access to special areas like this across the Upper Peninsula.

For further details regarding the gift, please see www.michigan.gov/publiclandnotices, Land Transfer Case No. 20220022. Public comments should be submitted by Thursday, March 24, 2022 to Scott Goeman, Real Estate Services, MIDNR, at GoemanS@Michigan.gov and questions can be directed to 517-284-5972. The proposed gift will be considered at the April 14th NRC meeting and is planned to be completed by June 1, 2022.

General questions or comments for UPLC (*not* for official consideration by the DNR regarding the transfer) are welcome. Please contact Andrea Denham, Executive Director of the Upper Peninsula Land Conservancy, at (906)225-8067 or andrea@uplandconservancy.org with any questions, comments, or concerns.