

Engage communities and activate local solutions to sustain a healthy Lake Huron Forever.

## Lake Huron Forever Pledge

Charter Township of Alpena, the City of Alpena and Alpena County know that a healthy Lake Huron means a healthy, strong and vibrant future for our communities. As a result, we are committed to keeping the protection of Lake Huron at the forefront of our planning, decision making and resource allocation.

Our community well-being and economic prosperity are tied to Lake Huron. We understand that access to healthy natural resources like fresh air, clean water and public land improve the health and wellness of our entire community.

We must work together to protect the forests, wetlands and waterways to address threats of pollution and flooding caused by stormwater, proactively plan for the impacts of a changing climate, support native plant restoration and provide corridors for wildlife.

We are committed to understanding the unique connections our residents and visitors have to the Alpena area and incorporating their priorities and concerns into our decision making as we continue to lead natural resources protection efforts in our region. We pledge to protect Lake Huron forever.

### Our Lake Huron Forever Pledge

- We pledge to create, implement and update a Lake Huron Forever Community Road Map.
- We promise to serve as an example of how to proactively protect Lake Huron by sharing our work with other Lake Huron communities.
- We will allocate resources (time, money, people) to understanding emerging needs and opportunities to protect Lake Huron forever.
- We will commit to and encourage all community organizations and residents to take their own actions to protect Lake Huron, forever.
- We will give back to Lake Huron by examining management practices across municipal departments to identify strategies to improve land and water resource protection efforts.
- We will share our pledge with neighboring community leaders, as well as state, provincial and federal representatives to generate more conversation and positive action for Lake Huron and Lake Huron communities.

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### **Our Lake Huron Forever Community Road Map**

Charter Township of Alpena, City of Alpena and Alpena County have identified several specific issues that are imperative to protecting the health of the Thunder Bay River, Thunder Bay and Lake Huron. With the support of the Lake Huron Forever network, the Township, City and County will work cooperatively to address these issues with the following goals and action steps.

#### **Goals**

- **Support and maintain current programs.** To best serve our communities, the Township, City and County must take a strategic and pragmatic approach to supporting economic, environmental and social programs to ensure the long-term sustainability of our efforts. We aim to ensure current and future programs are within our capacity to sustain.
- **Curb Stormwater Runoff.** To improve and protect water quality, the three governments have prioritized reducing and improving the quality of stormwater runoff, which can carry pollutants such as road salt, nutrients and sediment to nearby waters. Our common goal is to increase the use of nature-based solutions and innovative approaches to manage stormwater on municipal property while balancing the maintenance needs and aesthetic considerations of the community. We will explore ways to educate, incentivize and empower private landowners to manage their stormwater.
- **Improve understanding and protection of sensitive areas.** By integrating natural habitats into Alpena area planning, we can support biodiversity, wildlife, and enhance urban resilience. Our citizens will benefit from cleaner air and water as well as health benefits associated with being in nature. Future mapping, climate adaptation plans and zoning amendments will consider best management practices for protection of these unique areas and water quality.
- **Strengthen communication and coordination across local partners and organizations.** The Alpena area has active organizations dedicating time and investment to programs that educate, protect and enhance the community's natural and cultural assets. Lake Huron's history, ecology, beauty and eco-tourism potential is woven into the fabric of community life through art, events, volunteer opportunities and place-based stewardship learning offerings for youth. The Township, City and County understand the need to coordinate messaging, share resources and leverage opportunities collectively - working toward stronger coordination and communication across programs to amplify positive impact and storytelling is important.
- **Provide a strong and comprehensive recycling program.** The benefits of recycling go beyond keeping trash out of our landfills, it reduces air and water pollution, conserves energy and helps keep our waterways clean. Recycling uses less energy, creates less waste and conserves our natural resources in comparison to sourcing, processing and transporting raw materials. These impacts go far beyond our city limits. The Township, City and County are founding members of the Northeast Michigan Materials Management Authority (NMMMA) and are

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dedicated to providing residents with a comprehensive, accessible recycling program. They will also support efforts to build a circular economy.

- **Control the spread of invasive species.** Invasive plant and animal species spread aggressively and cause ecological and economic harm. These species outcompete native species, strain fisheries, obstruct lake views, hinder recreational activities such as swimming and boating and can decrease property values. In the Alpena area, invasive plants such as Phragmites, baby's breath and European frog-bit have taken over many sensitive coastal, lake, wetland and riparian habitats. The Township, City and County commit to continuing current efforts and to staying vigilant to new and emerging threats in order to effectively manage negative impacts.
- **Identify and develop opportunities for public education and engagement.** With new programs like recycling and opportunities to elevate natural resources in local planning and decisions, the City, County and Township recognize the need to support these initiatives with public education and engagement. Understanding and support from residents and visitors is important to sustaining investments and positive impact. Public education and engagement opportunities will be part of program planning with opportunities for active volunteer organizations, area businesses, the local school district and youth programs to be involved in design and delivery of the information.
- **Prioritize skill development and training for governmental staff and officials.** We will increase emphasis on environmental education and training programs for our staff and officials. There are many programs, tools, trainings and offerings through the Lake Huron Forever network and elsewhere that can have a meaningful impact on our communities. Deeper learning on coastal resilience planning, invasive species identification and removal, sustainable development, green cities initiatives and other related topics will directly strengthen and sustain efforts advanced through our Lake Huron Forever Pledge.

### Action Steps

**Charter Township of Alpena, City of Alpena and Alpena County, in coordination and collaboration will collectively;**

1. Work across boundaries and programs to protect our shared resources. We will review our Lake Huron Forever (LHF) road map during regular meetings and participate in peer-to-peer learning opportunities.
2. Incorporate review and updating of the Pledge with onboarding of new staff/elected officials.
3. Install visual representation(s) showcasing the commitment to become a Lake Huron Forever community. This could include signage, storm drain stamps, business window decals, etc..
4. Continue to expand recycling in government operations and for Alpena Area citizens by actively participating with other members of NMMMA. This will include expanded services to

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- both urban and rural residents, as well as an increase in the types and quantities of recyclables collected.
5. Work with education partners, such as the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (NEMIGLSI) and Alpena Public Schools, to engage youth, identify place-based stewardship projects that advance pledge activities and foster opportunities to pilot a Lake Huron Forever school-based Pledge program.
  6. Support education and training opportunities for staff and officials that increase awareness of local natural resource issues, as well as the available tools and skills to prioritize protection of water quality and natural resources in planning, design and decision making.
  7. Engage with local ecotourism initiatives such as the Viking Cruises, Thunder Bay River Center, Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Trail, US 23 Heritage Route and others, to balance ecotourism opportunities and promotion in ways that proactively protect and steward local natural resources on a long-term basis.
  8. Tell the LHF story through various media outlets and share LHF connections at local gatherings, meetings and programs. Update web pages to highlight efforts to protect our water, promote on social media and explore radio and print opportunities.
  9. Discuss and identify opportunities to raise or allocate funding for LHF programming and projects including incorporating these goals into grant applications and budgetary considerations for the various stakeholder departments.

#### **Charter Township of Alpena**

1. The Charter Township of Alpena will incorporate Sensitive Features Overlay and LHF Pledge goals into the current Master Planning and Recreation Planning efforts and future planning processes. These efforts can help prioritize chapters within these plans dedicated to natural resource protection and will inform new or improved zoning ordinances that balance the protection of natural resources with area development.
2. Evaluate and update current zoning practices to include low-impact development, green infrastructure, sensitive area protection, naturalized lawn opportunities and improved parking lot practices.
3. Explore incentive programs that promote green infrastructure on private property.
4. Continue our partnership with Huron Pines to conduct coastal inventories and invasive controls on Township held coastal properties and privately held parcels.
5. Work with Huron Pines and stewardship partners to develop a guidance resource for utilizing native plants and native species in development projects as an alternative to non-native grasses and ground cover. The Township will coordinate with the City and County in development of this resource so it can be used across the Alpena Area.
6. Promote educational outreach to agricultural producers along sensitive riparian areas.

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### **City of Alpena**

1. The City of Alpena, in partnership with Huron Pines, will identify and implement green infrastructure projects at priority sites in order to capture and treat stormwater before entering the Thunder Bay River and Lake Huron.
2. Evaluate and update current zoning practices to include low-impact development, green infrastructure, sensitive area protection, naturalized lawn opportunities and improved parking lot practices.
3. Integrate LHF Pledge goals in updates and development of relevant city plans, such as Recreation and Master Plans.
4. Share LHF Pledge adoption and local importance with Economic and Community Development organizations working to promote Alpena, and the local outdoor recreation economy.
5. Support implementation of the Forests to MI Faucets program to increase local awareness of local resident drinking water sources and how to ensure safe, clean drinking water at the community level through healthy forests. Help to identify opportunities for urban tree canopy implementation and other associated drinking water protection projects.
6. Continue to prioritize the renaturalization of coastal parks in order to improve user experience, improve wildlife habitat and increase coastal resilience.
7. Explore incentive programs that promote green infrastructure on private property.

### **Alpena County**

1. The County will work with community, trails and conservation partners to plan, design and implement trail and pathways projects that enhance local outdoor recreation opportunities for varying abilities and mobilities, strengthen community health and incorporate stewardship considerations to protect local natural resources.
2. Support information sharing and implementation related to the County-Wide Invasive Species Assessment completed by Huron Pines to better inform high priority needs for invasive species removal and native plant restoration. The County may explore cost-share options for removal and help connect technical partners to landowners with high priority species.
3. Work with the City of Alpena and Charter Township of Alpena to strategically protect sensitive habitat, balance undeveloped land and green space with development opportunities/community needs and identify potential green infrastructure projects to reduce water quality impacts across the county.
4. Integrate LHF Pledge goals in updates and development of relevant county plans, such as the active Recreation and Master Plans update process.



**LAKE  
HURON  
FOREVER**

**THE PLEDGE**

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*Signature*

Nathan Skibbe, Charter Township of Alpena Supervisor

*Date*

9.1.2023

Rachel Smolinski, Alpena City Manager

9/5/23

Mary Catherine Hannah, Alpena County Administrator

9/5/23

