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## Grand Traverse Bay Designated As State Underwater Preserve

### Backers say Preserve will help tourism and historic protection

*Traverse City, Mich.*—Grand Traverse Bay and surrounding areas of Lake Michigan have been identified by the State as the 12<sup>th</sup> Underwater Preserve in Michigan. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality recently announced the designation.

The creation of the Grand Traverse Bay Underwater Preserve is expected to bring in millions of dollars in underwater tourism by attracting both recreational scuba divers and underwater researchers.

“The designation opens up a wealth of historical and archeological research,” says Jack Spencer, President of the Grand Traverse Bay Underwater Preserve Council. Spencer says the documentation of numerous shipwrecks and other underwater finds is sure to attract a large number of recreational scuba divers from around the country.

Creation of the Underwater Preserve helps locate artifacts that are important parts of Michigan’s maritime past. It also assures those discoveries are protected for future generations. Work on the Preserve has already led to the development of underwater classes being offered at Northwestern Michigan College. Organizers say they expect the underwater development will create a thirst for information that will be available to K-12 education.

Backers of the Preserve have been working for the designation for three years. They add that creation of other Preserves in the State usually took much longer. “It’s a testimonial to the hard work of a lot of volunteers who made the case that an Underwater Preserve in Northwest Michigan was vital to the region,” says Spencer. Spencer added that the Grand Traverse Bay Underwater Preserve Council is eager to work with others to better explore, research and understand the underwater world of the region.

The Grand Traverse Bay Underwater Preserve Council is a fund of the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation. More information is available online at [www.gtbup.org](http://www.gtbup.org)

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