



Public Update Scheduled for June 29 on White Lake Community Native Landscape Project

The public will have the opportunity to learn about the progress of a project to transform acres of traditional lawn into natural landscapes at Alcoa Howmet's Whitehall campus at an upcoming public meeting. The update is scheduled for 7 p.m. Monday, June 29 at the White Lake Community Library, located at 3900 White Lake Drive in Whitehall.

According to Jeff Auch, executive director of the Muskegon Conservation District, which is leading the project, "This is a great time for a community update because the area will soon show exciting signs of new colorful summer plants." The meeting will provide an overview of the project, its current status, and also, information on additional areas at the company's local property that the new partnership, guided by a community steering committee, is transforming into natural landscapes.

Amy Heisser, director of human resources for Alcoa Howmet, is thrilled to showcase the innovative project. "Not only is this good for Alcoa Howmet because it helps the environment and saves money," she says, "it's good for the White Lake area community because it will bring back more natural green space to the area and create habitat that is important for attracting many different songbirds and butterflies."

The meeting will also feature Patricia Pennell, of the Grand Rapids-based West Michigan Environmental Action Council, who will present information on rain gardens, which are planned for the site. Rain gardens are a new method of addressing storm water runoff that is more environmentally friendly and attractive than traditional retention ponds. Pennell, the founder of an award-winning West Michigan rain gardens program, will help design the creative gardens for the Alcoa Howmet site later this fall. Her presentation will provide information on how the innovative natural systems work, what plants can be used in the gardens, and how the gardens can be built in a variety of locations, such as individual residences, urban areas, and on business sites. "I am excited to begin the planning process for the rain gardens," says Pennell, "and I hope to involve interested citizens, local garden clubs, and young people in installing the new landscape feature at Alcoa Howmet."

The update will also include information about educational resources on native landscaping, such as books and web sites, as well as opportunities for involvement in the project by local citizens, school students, local governmental officials, and area businesses.

For more information, call Tanya Cabala, Great Lakes Consulting (231) 981-0016; or Jeff Auch, Muskegon Conservation District (231) 773-0008.