

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 12, 2024

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**Transformative Vision for Coal Plant Site Restores Waterfront Access for Community,
Offers Model for Coal Plant Closures**

Bay City, MI – The Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy (SBLC) in collaboration with the Environmental Law & Policy Center released an exciting new [greenway study](#) outlining the community’s vision for the historic Dan E. Karn coal plant site on the Saginaw Bay and River. The study follows Consumers Energy’s [announcement](#) that it plans to build 85 megawatts of solar energy generation (about 250,000 solar panels) on the site. This visionary blueprint will not only create a hub for parklands, wildlife, and clean energy but also sets a bold precedent for the redevelopment of coal plants across the region. The next stage of planning for the project can begin immediately.

This overall concept for the future use of the Karn site is supported by leading local public officials, including Bay County and Hampton Township; Consumers Energy; and leading environmental groups, including the Environmental Law & Policy Center and Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy; and the Bay Area Chamber of Commerce.

Titled “[Where the River Meets the Bay](#),” SBLC’s redevelopment blueprint prioritizes connectivity on multiple fronts: fostering community ties through a series of outdoor activity centers, linking the new site to the regional trail network, and increasing public access to the Saginaw Bay waterfront. The project also dedicates hundreds of acres to habitat restoration efforts and reserves some areas for commercial or mixed-use development.

Consumers Energy has committed to introducing [85MW of utility-scale solar](#) at the site, enough to power 20,000 homes and contribute to local, county, and school district tax bases. Consumers Energy retired two coal units in June 2023, leaving two natural gas and fuel units to operate at periods of peak demand through 2031. The utility will work with SBLC to identify waterfront acreage that can be accessed for public recreational space, marking the first time in generations that these lands and their waterfront will be accessible to the community.

"The area around the Dan E. Karn site is flourishing with wildlife and offers countless recreational opportunities for the community," said **Zachary Branigan, Executive Director of the Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy**. "Providing public land here creates a long, contiguous stretch of undisturbed trail connecting the site to the rest of the region and ensures equal access to the most precious natural resources in the area. Bay City deserves better access to Saginaw Bay and Lake Huron, and this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to redefine what it means to live here."

The vision organizes the sitewide infrastructure by activity centers, offering hiking, canoeing, kayaking, boating, and picnicking areas. Each center offers a “park within a park,” linked by trails but distinct in character. Community input shaped these centers, reflecting residents' desire for diverse recreational options. The Karn site provides a unique opportunity to create a long, contiguous stretch of undisturbed trail, connecting to the region's existing high-quality trail network.

“The plan to transform the historic Dan E. Karn coal plant site on the Saginaw Bay into greenways for public enjoyment and recreation, and clean, solar energy generation is a win-win for the future,” **said Howard Learner, Executive Director of the Environmental Law & Policy Center.** “This Power Plants to Parklands + Renewable Energy (P2P+RE) approach is an innovative model starting in Saginaw-Bay City for re-envisioning and redeveloping retired coal plant sites that can be replicated across Michigan and the Midwest.”

There are more than 60 coal plants in the Midwest that are either retired or in various stages of shutting down. ELPC is working to seize the once-in-a-generation opportunity to [transform these lakefront and riverfront sites into parklands](#) for public recreation and conservation. These sites are already hardwired into the grid, creating prime opportunities for solar energy and energy storage development providing clean energy generation, job creation, and tax base value for local communities.

“For over 130 years, Consumers Energy has served Michigan communities by maintaining good corporate citizenship with residents,” **said Brandon Hofmeister, Senior Vice President, Consumers Energy.** “We strive to incorporate community input in project development opportunities – including at the Karn site. Based on our conversations, we intend to align with the feedback and allow access to waterways while balancing safety requirements that may arise should we seek to develop this area with future economic or grid development projects.”

"Increasing public access to the Saginaw Bay has been a priority of mine and my administration for the past eight years," **said Jim Barcia, Bay County Executive.** "Access to our waterfront is an important Quality of Life feature for our residents and visitors alike." Mr. Barcia noted, "Creating new public access to our own Great Lakes shoreline will be an important legacy for Consumers Energy."

"I fully support the redevelopment and revitalization efforts to transform the Dan E. Karn site," said **Terri Close, Hampton Township Supervisor.** “Given that the area is zoned industrial, I hope some of the property can attract new businesses and create jobs, boosting our local economy. Moreover, SBLC's proposal to improve waterfront access to the Saginaw Bay is particularly exciting. Despite having approximately nine miles of Saginaw Bay shoreline, Hampton Township currently has limited access points for residents to enjoy the waterfront. Redeveloping part of the property into a public space will offer much-needed access to the Bay, significantly enhancing our community’s quality of life by making the Bay's natural beauty more accessible to everyone."

"The Bay Area Chamber of Commerce supports this transformative redevelopment plan that not only ushers in a new era of clean energy but also revitalizes our community by opening invaluable waterfront access and recreational spaces," said **Magen Samyn, CEO & President, Bay Area Chamber of Commerce.** “This initiative will not only enhance the quality of life for our residents but also serve as a pioneering model for coal plant closures nationwide. As a Hampton Township resident, I am excited to see our community lead the way in creating sustainable and vibrant community assets that benefit both our economy and environment."

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