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CONTACT:
Jake Lynch
Media Relations
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
202.974.5107
jake@railstotrails.org

MICHIGAN OFF-ROAD GROUP HONORED IN NATION'S CAPITAL

Award comes as funding threatened for popular Recreational Trails Program

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Cycle Conservation Clubs of Michigan (CCCM), a nonprofit organization heralded for the conservation of natural areas in the state while also promoting the sport of off-road motorcycling, will be honored in Washington, D.C. next week at the 2013 Recreational Trails Program awards ceremony.

The CCCM is one of just 10 organizations across America to receive a Recreational Trails Program Achievement Award, to be announced at the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill, June 4.

The award recognizes CCCM’s role in overseeing the East and West Twin Creek Bridge project, which addressed critical soil degradation issues while connecting visitors to 140 miles of designated motorized trails in Lake County. Off-road motorcycling attracts thousands of visitors to the area each year, and the local trail system is an important part of the region’s tourism economy and an asset for local residents.

The CCCM was supported in its efforts by the Recreational Trails Program, a federal grant program funded largely by gas taxes paid by off-road vehicles. One of the few funding sources dedicated to the construction and maintenance of trails, the Recreational Trails Program provided more than $550,000 for the new bridges, which were designed and built by Michigan firms.

“This project is a terrific example of what the Recreational Trails Program has been able to do for Michigan over the past 21 years,” says Marianne Fowler of the national nonprofit Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, a member of the Coalition for Recreational Trails. “Recreational Trails Program funding leverages many millions in other private and public investments – investments not only
in trails but in local economies, in main street businesses, and in recreational options for the people of Michigan.”

However, despite its bipartisan support and tremendous success since it was introduced in 1992, the Recreational Trails Program currently faces the threat of elimination. According to Fowler, each year state governors can leave the program of their own volition simply by notifying the U.S. Department of Transportation of that intention by August 31.

“Last year, Governor Snyder kept Michigan in the Rec’ Trails Program, and it continued to make great things possible for the state,” she says. “We need him to do the same for 2014.”

“Michigan is lucky to have had a history of far-sighted leaders who could see the benefit that recreational trails bring to the state,” Fowler says. “Committing to the Rec’ Trails Program is one of the reasons why Michigan enjoys an outdoor recreation economy that generates $18.7 billion each year in consumer spending, and directly supports 194,000 in Michigan jobs. This is exactly what federal funding programs should do – stimulate investment.”

Fowler says it is important that Michigan residents and businesspeople contact Governor Snyder in the coming weeks to thank him for keeping Michigan in the program this year, and ask him to do the same for 2014.

“The governor needs to hear from his constituents that this is a program that benefits Michigan,” Fowler says. “Otherwise, the decision can be made to siphon these dedicated funds away from trails investments and into other programs. If this happens, we pull the rug out from underneath local champions like the Cycle Conservation Clubs of Michigan.”

Urge Governor Snyder to reaffirm his support for the Recreational Trails Program at www.railstotrails.org/SaveRecTrails.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, a nonprofit organization with more than 100,000 members, is the nation’s largest trails organization dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines and connecting corridors. Founded in 1986, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s national office is located in Washington, D.C., with regional offices in California, Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. For more information visit www.railstotrails.org.