



## DEFENSE OF PLACE

a project of Resource Renewal Institute

Fort Mason Center, Bldg. D  
San Francisco, CA 94123

415.928.3774 Fax 415.928.4050  
[www.defenseofplace.org](http://www.defenseofplace.org)

### For Immediate Release

September 25, 2008

#### *Contacts:*

Terry Lodge, 419-205-7084  
[tjlodge50@yahoo.com](mailto:tjlodge50@yahoo.com)

Julie Weiss, 269-277-6932  
Protect Jean Klock Park  
[info@protectjkp.com](mailto:info@protectjkp.com)

Cindy Arch, 707-395-0438  
Executive Director, Defense of Place  
[arch@rri.org](mailto:arch@rri.org)

### JEAN KLOCK PARK PROTECTORS SUCCEED IN HALTING BEACH DESTRUCTION

**(San Francisco, CA) - September 25, 2008** After putting their freedom on the line in a valiant effort to protect Jean Klock Park, citizen activists were victorious in stopping the bulldozers sent by Whirlpool Corporation-backed Harbor Shores Community Redevelopment Inc. that this week decimated the natural beach and destroyed legacy trees that have graced the Park since it was dedicated in 1917.

Bowing to public outrage, the developers postponed their bulldozing until after an October 2 hearing when a federal court judge will rule on an injunction filed Monday by the park advocates to stop the destruction.

Seven Benton Harbor and Benton Township residents sued the National Park Service in federal court last month, alleging extensive violations of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) by the NPS and failure to properly apply regulations mandated under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. The State of Michigan and the city of Benton Harbor are named as co-defendants.

- more -

Toledo, Ohio, attorney Terry J. Lodge who represents the plaintiffs in the pending federal suit said, "All of this destruction is part of the illegal conversion of Jean Klock Park. A golf course will permanently damage the park's sand dunes, but that impact has not been fully disclosed to the public."

Benton Harbor City Commissioners in June turned over 22 acres of their city's only lakeshore public park to private developers for construction of an exclusive Jack Nicklaus signature golf course. In return, the developers pay \$35,000 per year to Benton Harbor; contribute \$5,000 annually to a Community Benefits Fund; give Benton Harbor a percentage of golf course net profits; promise to oversee spending of \$3 million for roads, trails and parking lots which will destroy many of the natural features of the park as part of the golf course plan; and provide 38 acres of non-contiguous brownfields and wetlands for new and mitigated parkland, some of which are located in neighboring St. Joseph, home of area Representative Fred Upton, a Whirlpool family heir who lives two blocks from Jean Klock Park.

Governor Jennifer Granholm, Congressman Upton, and city commissioners tout the 530-acre, \$500 million dollar development that includes million dollar homes as the salvation of poverty-stricken Benton Harbor. Blue-sky promises have ranged from improving literacy and homeownership, to reducing the high-school dropout rate, more than doubling of the tax base, and new jobs.

Before the recent upheaval in the national housing market, the Western Michigan Business Review in April reported that the average household income of new second-home owners, estimated at 65% of buyers by economic development agency Cornerstone Alliance, would be \$185,000. The average annual income for current Benton Harbor households is less than \$26,000.

Defense of Place Executive Director Cindy Arch said her organization is seeing a disturbing trend across the nation of public lands being given over to corporate control. "The last 'best land' in America is coveted by big business. When the government facilitates the transfer of public resources to private interests, the government is no longer acting in the interest of its citizens."

Defense of Place has assisted the advocates in the fight to save Jean Klock Park, providing technical assistance and obtaining documents in the public interest from federal, state and local agencies through the Freedom of Information Act that otherwise would not have been made public. Defense of Place works nationally for permanent protection of parks, open space and wildlife refuges. To contribute or for more information:

Defense of Place [www.defenseofplace.org](http://www.defenseofplace.org)  
Protect Jean Klock Park [www.protectjkp.com](http://www.protectjkp.com)