----------IMMEDIATE RELEASE----------

Enhancing Sustainable Tourism in Northeast Michigan

March 2, 2006 Contact: Brandon Schroeder, Michigan Sea Grant Extension, 989.984.1056 — The three-county region, of Presque Isle, Alpena and Alcona counties, is one of eight communities nationwide to be selected to participate in the Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) program. Administered by the American Institute of Architects' Center for Communities by Design, the Northeast Michigan SDAT will be an essential part of an integrated, social, economic and ecological assessment to provide decision makers in northeast Michigan with potential policy options, or tools, designed to enhance tourism-related economic opportunities in the region.

Convened by the Northeast Michigan Council of Government, in partnership with Michigan Sea Grant, the integrated assessment actively engages stakeholders in an analytical process with tangible results. "Both NEMCOG and Sea Grant have expertise in working with stakeholders on planning and coastal management issues, and are excited that the AIA's Northeast Michigan SDAT will bring a team of multidisciplinary professionals with experience in sustainability principals to the project," said Don Scavia, Director of Michigan Sea Grant.

"The AIA's expert group of volunteer professionals will kick-start our effort and help us really understand where the people of the region want to be, vis-à-vis the economy, environment and their quality of life, in the next twenty years," said Diane Rekowski, Executive Director of NEMCOG.

The SDAT Team will visit the region for an intense, three-day period most likely early in the summer although the exact date is yet to be determined. Beyond helping the local community envision a shared vision of the future, the SDAT team will identify issues the community will need to address in order to reach a sustainable future. This will enable another team of researchers and stakeholders to design a series of policy options or tools that will allow the community to implement the vision.

"Sustainability is a key outcome of this process," notes Bradley J. Butcher, AIA, vice president of the AIA's Upper Great Lakes Chapter and a supporter of the AIA project. "Our goal is to give communities some of the tools that they'll need to use in order to reach the future they desire."

The SDAT Team will join NEMCOG and Sea Grant in working with state/federal/regional agencies, municipal/township/county government, economic development units, tourism, Michigan State University Extension and others that are involved in this integrated assessment. Specific state-owned properties, such as Thompson's Harbor and Negwegon State Parks, Rockport sinkholes, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve are key focal areas of this study.

See more about the Integrated Assessment process, www.miseagrant.umich.edu/ia.

Michigan Sea Grant, a cooperative program of the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, is dedicated to the protection and sustainable use of Great Lakes and coastal resources and is supported, in part, by NOAA. In addition to resources from the American Institute of Architects and NOAA, this project is supported by the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Quality, the University of Michigan and Michigan State University.

NEMCOG is a regional entity, with elected board members, whose role is to facilitate intergovernmental cooperation and coordination in the eight-county region of Northeast Michigan. NEMCOG is also committed to providing for a controlled growth policy, to preserving and improving the environment, to pursuing greater efficiency and responsiveness of local units of government, and to improving the ecological, social and economic well being of the region's citizens.

About the AIA SDAT Program

The SDAT is a community assistance program that focuses on the principles of sustainability. SDATs bring teams of volunteer professionals (such as architects, urban designers, planners, hydrologists, economists, attorneys, and others) to work with community decision-makers and stakeholders to help

them develop a vision and framework for a sustainable future. For more information pertaining to the SDAT program and past projects, please visit www.aia.org/liv_sdat.

About the AIA Center for Communities by Design

The Center for Communities by Design is the clearinghouse for the American Institute of Architects' many activities-from promoting sustainable design to leading design based technical assistance projects in communities-that influence the quality of life in our nation's communities. The center is a nonpartisan forum that provides information, develops policy, creates partnerships, and assists in advocacy efforts to facilitate discussions of community design and inform choices for neighborhoods, cities, regions, and the nation.

About The American Institute of Architects

For almost 150 years, members of The American Institute of Architects have worked with each other and their communities to create more valuable, healthy, secure, and sustainable buildings and cityscapes. AIA members have access to the right people, knowledge, and tools to create better design, and through such resources and access, they help clients and communities make their visions real.

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