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Ag Director Appoints Nine Members to Agricultural Tourism Commission

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Agency: Agriculture

Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) Director Mitch Irwin today appointed nine members to serve on the Agricultural Tourism Zoning Advisory Commission. Four of the members represent agricultural tourism enterprises, and two represent local government. The remaining commission is comprised of one member each from Travel Michigan; MDA; and a convention bureau, visitors' bureau, or chamber of commerce in a rural area.

The four individuals representing agricultural tourism enterprises are: Walter Brys of Brys Estate Vineyards in Old Mission Peninsula; Jim Graham of Farmland Pheasant Hunters, Inc., in St. Johns; Herb Teichman of Tree-mendus Fruit Farm in Eau Claire; and Abbey Jacobson of Westview Orchards in Washington.

The two individuals representing local units of government are Greg McKenzie of Lima Township Board of Trustees and Carl Osentoski of Huron County Development Corporation.

The individual representing Travel Michigan is Melinda Reamer, Director of Marketing.

The individual representing MDA is Ann Jousma-Miller, Michigan Commission of Agriculture.

The individual representing a convention bureau, visitors' bureau, or chamber of commerce in a rural area is Vickie Micheau, Director of the Delta County Chamber of Commerce.

This commission was created as a result of bipartisan legislation signed into law earlier this year. Under the guiding legislation, Agricultural Tourism is defined as the practice of visiting an agribusiness, horticultural, or agricultural operation, including, but not limited to, farms, orchards, wineries, or companion animal or livestock shows, for the purpose of recreation, education, or active involvement in the operation.

Within one year, the commission is required to submit to the governor and the appropriate legislative standing committees a report concerning the effects of local zoning on agricultural tourism, a model of local zoning ordinance provisions to promote agricultural tourism, recommendations concerning the use of logo signage to promote agricultural tourism, recommendations for other measures to promote and remove barriers to agricultural tourism, and any other recommendations concerning agricultural tourism. In addition, the commission is charged with undertaking various studies necessary for the report.

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