

Natural resource management and environmental protection is being abandoned by the Governor and the State Legislature

General tax funding for natural resources management and environmental protection has vanished and our state leaders don't seem to be concerned!

The facts:

- This year, the state will spend approximately \$2.50 per Michigan resident for natural resource protection and \$3.30 per person for environmental protection from the general fund. Compare this to the \$12.50 per person to support the legislature and \$187 per person to pay for our prison system.
- Less than one penny of every dollar from the general fund is spent on DNR programs and general fund support for the DNR has shrunk by 66% since 2000. The DEQ has lost 75% of their general fund since 2002 and the Michigan Department of Agriculture has lost 50% since 2001.
- Meanwhile, hunters, anglers, snowmobilers, state park users, and permit applicants have been required to shoulder the burden of paying for Michigan's spectacular natural resources. In every case, license fees, permit fees, or user fees have risen or fee increases have been proposed. The DEQ is seeking fee increases for eight program areas- some fees need to be increased 400% to support current program funding levels! Hunters and angler license fees are also expected to increase. The DNR has requested license fees to approximately double.

This disinvestment is "penny wise and pound foolish."

- For every dollar invested in conservation, \$116 is returned.
- Surveys of knowledge workers found that the quality of life amenities they found essential to a region included: "Easy access to outdoor activities" and a "clean and healthy environment and a commitment to preserving natural resources for enjoyment and recreation."¹ Investment in these amenities is essential to recruiting the knowledge workers needed to turning around Michigan's economy.



Michigan Natural Resource and Recreation Contributions:

- 750,000 licensed hunters contribute \$1.3 billion annually to the economy.
- Licensed anglers contribute \$2 billion annually to the economy.
- Michigan ranks 1st in the nation in the number of registered snowmobiles, 3rd in the number of registered boats.
- Michigan state parks welcome 22 million visitors annually, contributing \$580 million to the state's economy.
- Recreational boating contributes \$2 billion annually to our economy.
- Snowmobilers create a \$1 billion bonanza for northern Michigan during snowy winters.
- Michigan's tourism industry sells the state's beauty (Great Lakes, forests, rivers, waterfalls) to attract travel dollars. In 2004, travelers to and in Michigan spent approximately \$17.5 billion, generating \$971 million in state and local taxes and accounting for 193,000 jobs statewide.

¹ Florida, Competing in an Age of Talent. P 47



The impacts of non-existent natural resource funding on Michigan:

- The Great Lakes sport fishery is a disaster ... invasive species, loss of wetlands, sediment loading, and pollution are to blame.
- Although everyone recognizes the importance of wetlands, Michigan has a program to issue permits to allow for filling or dredging of wetlands, but no program to protect or restore critical wetlands.
- Michigan has no long-term funding source for water quality monitoring. The state borrowed money to pay for our current water quality monitoring program.
- All state funding for conservation districts has been eliminated, even though these groups are critical for healthy conservation practices on the land, and in our forests.
- Invasive species are threatening our forests. Emerald ash borers are marching through the state destroying the ash trees. Beech scale threatens our beech forests, and phragmites are crowding our native wetland vegetation.
- Closing of Great Lakes beaches are an annual summer event due to high levels of fecal matter.
- Comerica announces they are moving their headquarters to Texas because it is “too hard” to recruit workers to Michigan.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOLUTIONS

- Increase real estate transfer fee (Florida).
- Increase the state’s sales tax and dedicate the increase to natural resources and environmental protection (Alabama, Missouri).
- Institute a severance fee for non-metallic metals.
- Tax CO₂ from gas wells
- Implement a water withdrawal fee.
- Increase tax on beer and dedicate to natural resources/ environmental protection.
- Increase “service fee” from 2% to 2.5% and dedicate to natural resources/environmental protection.

If Michigan is going to succeed, the Governor and the legislature MUST make natural resource funding a priority! The solutions exist!

Take Action: Call/ Write/ Fax the Governor and your State Representative and Senator and tell them that protecting Michigan’s natural resources is your priority and you expect it to be theirs! **Tell them you want them to find a long-term sustainable funding solution for management of Michigan’s natural resources and protection of the environment.**

Governor Granholm
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909
Phone: 514-373-3400
Fax: 517-335-6863

State Senator
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536
Phone: 517-373-2400

State Representative
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514
Phone: 517-373-6339

