Michigan United Conservation Clubs

MUCC is the Home of: *Michigan Out-of-Doors*™ Magazine & *Michigan Out-of-Doors*™ Television
The Institute for Conservation Education: Wildlife Encounters™ • Tracks™ Magazine for Kids • Camp for Kids • Conservation Academy

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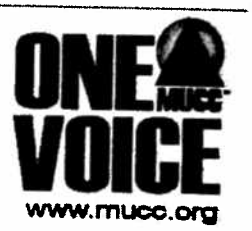

House Committee on Great Lakes and the Environment

Thursday, December 3, 2009
Testimony of Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC)
Re: Senate Bills 388-89

Madame Chair and committee members, thank you for allowing Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) the opportunity to comment on Senate Bills 388-89. MUCC is Michigan's largest statewide conservation organization with over 40,000 individual members and 500 affiliated clubs.

Aside from being active in the outdoors, MUCC members understand that outdoor education and stewardship is the key to keeping Michigan's most treasured asset - our natural resources - available and abundant for future generations.

For many people in Michigan, our state parks, forests, and recreation areas are the first gateways to experience the wonder of Michigan's great out-of-doors. Unfortunately these gateways to recreation are deteriorating due to the lack of state general funds combined with the effects of old age and neglect - shoreline erosion, caved-in roofs, overgrown trails, crumbling boat ramps and roadways, rotting historic buildings, etc. Senate Bills 388 and 389, along with House Bills 4677 and 4678 are a refreshing example of bi-cameral and bi-partisan cooperation to solve one of our state's many challenging problems. But perhaps more importantly, it is also the calculated work-product of Michigan citizens through the Citizen's Committee for Michigan State Parks: sportsmen, state lawmakers, academics, state and park officials, local governments, and other citizen resource stewards all came together to craft this unique funding strategy for our state park system.

State parks are in need of sustainable funding in order to survive

MUCC is grateful for the opportunity to serve as a member of the Citizen's Committee and we're also proud that sportsmen and women have always paid for the conservation that sustains their recreational pursuits. However, just like other users groups that enjoy our state parks, sportsmen and women represent merely a fraction of the annual visitors and users of Michigan's 98 state park facilities. Since the 2004 elimination of general fund support for parks and conservation, recreational access, along with resource and habitat management, has fallen along with the economic condition of our state. As a result, eighteen percent of the funds allocated annually from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to the State Parks Endowment Fund are now needed to in order to keep the gates open instead of funding essential infrastructure repairs and park improvements. Looking ahead to 2010 with purported 20 percent General Fund cuts, it has become clear that our parks are in desperate need of a sustainable funding structure. Without one, our state parks will no longer be able to provide access to the quality outdoor experiences we know Michigan has to offer.