



Michigan Forest Association

6120 S. Clinton Trail, Eaton Rapids, MI 48827

Ph & fax 517-663-3423

miforest@acd.net

January 24, 2013

to: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Environment and the Great Lakes
from: William B. Botti, executive director
subject: Qualified Forestry bills: SB 51, 52, 53, 54 & 56

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these important bills. MFA is an association of landowners, foresters, educators and others dedicated to encouraging wise management of our forests. We were active participants in the development of House versions of these bills two years ago, but have not had a great deal of involvement in the Senate bills. Our Assistant Executive Director, Debra Huff, has been working with Ms. Butters recently and will continue in that capacity. She, regretfully, is unable to be here this morning.

There was not a lot of time to study the bills, but we have a few conceptual comments on the bills as we understand them:

- The **allowance of certain structures** on Qualified Forest land as written into the House bills was viewed by us as a great improvement over the original Act. That appears to be gone now; I could not find the rules under which certain structures might be permitted – only that the local Conservation District or the MDARD would explain how to proceed.
- The **new 2-mil tax** is unpopular among our members. One reason is that it does not appear to be “fair” in that it would apply to forest land, but not agricultural land. Another reason is that under the withdrawal provisions a landowner would seemingly be required to pay back the full 18 mils when he only received a 16 mil reduction. This would amount to paying the 2 mils twice.
- Other concerns have been raised about the **new fund** and about the variability among the Conservation Districts that may lead to confusion in enforcement of the laws.

However, we have complained for many years that no one pays any attention to forests or forest owners. Now we are getting the attention and we appreciate it. We don't want to whine about it, but we do want the new laws to be the best they can be. Debra Huff will continue to be available to work on this.

Thank you for your attention to the plight of the small forest owner.