



September 29, 2014

Michigan Senate Natural Resources,
Environment and Great Lakes Committee
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Sent via email to the Committee Clerk at cgaldes@senate.michigan.gov

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Traverse City, MI 49684
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RE: HB 4874 –Septage Waste Servicing

Dear Senators,

I am writing on behalf of The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay concerning HB 4874, which I understand you will consider at your October 2, 2014 meeting. The Watershed Center advocates for clean water in Grand Traverse Bay and acts to protect and preserve its watershed. We oppose HB 4874 because it may have adverse impacts to water resources in our watershed.

In 2004, all the townships in Grand Traverse County and Elmwood Township in Leelanau County (15 townships) passed the Uniform Septage Control Ordinance banning land application of septage in this area and requiring septage haulers to use the Grand Traverse Septage Treatment Facility. This requirement ensures septage waste in our region is disposed of lawfully and safely, limiting the potential for untreated waste to contaminate our water resources. HB 4874 would supersede this ordinance and indefinitely exempt servicers with storage tanks from requiring them to take septage waste to a receiving facility within their service area. The Grand Traverse Septage Treatment Facility is supported by our community because it provides central, lawful, safe, and predictable septage disposal opportunities throughout the year. Since all septage waste in the region is taken to the Facility, we have a centralized system to account for septic waste disposal, which facilitates compliance and reduces the opportunity for unlawful discharges.

HB 4874 would also allow for land application of septage in this area. As you know, the disposal of septage waste is carefully regulated by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and local health departments. For example, regulations concerning the land application of septage address permitting, education, screening, storage, cropping, soil analyzing, agronomic application rate calculations, and other requirements to ensure sufficient soil, water, and public health protections. However, these regulations are complex and require diligent, consistent, resource-intensive enforcement.

The Watershed Center has long supported the Grand Traverse Septage Treatment Facility, and we have partnered with the County to educate septic system owners about

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the importance – from both public health and water quality perspectives – of regular and lawful septage pumping and disposal. We are concerned that eliminating the requirement to use the regional facility while providing no additional compliance and enforcement resources to MDEQ and local health departments, the opportunity for unlawful disposal will increase resulting in adverse impacts to public health and water resources. We therefore oppose the proposed legislation HB 4874 and encourage you to do the same.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Christine Crissman".

Christine Crissman
Executive Director