



STATE OF MICHIGAN



DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

LANSING

REBECCA A. HUMPHRIES
DIRECTOR

April 1, 2009

The Honorable Patricia L. Birkholz, Chair
Senate Natural Resources and
Environmental Affairs Committee
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

The Honorable Rebekah Warren, Chair
House Great Lakes and
Environment Committee
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7514

Dear Senator Birkholz and Representative Warren:

In these trying economic times in Michigan, it would seem wise to assess the State's strengths. Certainly, Michigan's incredible, God given natural resources and outdoor recreational opportunities would top the list of strengths. If Michigan is seeking to expand an existing industry, it should focus on its natural resources by further developing and promoting hospitality, outdoor recreation and the tourism industries.

Prior to retirement, I owned and operated restaurants for 32 years. At our Traverse City operation, over 70 percent of our business was tourist related. Those tourist customers recreated in the northwest Michigan area because of the bays, streams, lakes, public forests, etcetera, or, in short, because of Michigan's natural resources. My business and many other businesses benefited and thrived from the economic impact of tourism.

We Michigan residents are blessed with ninety-eight incredible State parks. Most parks are located adjacent to one of Michigan's many beautiful natural features. Approximately 22 million people visit our State parks each year, many of whom are non-residents. Due to the lack of maintenance funding, the State park system is in danger of deterioration. This cannot be allowed to happen!!

Therefore, I strongly urge the Michigan Legislature to support the Citizen's Committee for Michigan State Parks' proposal to provide a new, innovative source of funding for the Michigan State Park system. This is a great opportunity to assure our park system will continue to be a vital force in the economic recovery of Michigan.

Sincerely,

Keith J. Charters, Chair
Natural Resource Commission

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
Keith J. Charters, Chair • Mary Brown • Hurley J. Coleman, Jr. • John Madigan • J. R. Richardson • Frank Wheatlake

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