

## APPROVING THE 2021-2027 PUBLIC LAND STRATEGY

Phone: (517) 373-8080  
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**House Bill 5388 as reported from committee**  
**Sponsor: Rep. Gary Howell**  
**Committee: Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation**  
**Complete to 11-10-21**

Analysis available at  
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

### SUMMARY:

House Bill 5388 would amend Part 5 (Department of Natural Resources) of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) to approve the strategic plan entitled “The Power of Public Lands: Your resources. Our commitment. Michigan’s legacy. Michigan Department of Natural Resources Public Land Strategy 2021-2027.”

The bill also would update language throughout these provisions to refer to the plan using only the term “strategic plan,” instead of both “strategic plan” and “plan.”

MCL 324.503

### BRIEF DISCUSSION:

According to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the DNR is entrusted with the care of 4.6 million acres of public lands and 6.4 million acres of mineral rights. A public land strategy is required under Michigan law for the management of these public lands and mineral rights. NREPA currently requires the DNR to submit specific information relating to the strategic plan and Michigan’s natural resources to the legislature and to post and annually update the DNR’s website. Additionally, beginning July 1, 2021, the DNR must propose an update to the strategic plan every six years for approval by the legislature.

The last strategic plan was approved in 2018.<sup>1</sup> The currently proposed strategic plan seeking approval by the legislature can be found on the DNR’s website.<sup>2</sup> The current land strategy goals include the protection of natural and cultural resources, providing access to outdoor public recreation opportunities, and performing responsible natural resource management.

During committee testimony, critics of the bill raised concerns about including the DNR’s stated commitment to combat climate change within its goal of protecting natural and cultural resources. These critics argue that the DNR is entrusted with the management of public lands and mineral rights for all Michiganders, yet some actions that claim to combat climate change might actually harm Michiganders. For example, critics argue that the DNR could make the decision to reduce the allowable timber harvest, which would harm local foresters.

Proponents of the bill responded that the DNR is on the front lines when it comes to climate change; the DNR faces issues with high waters affecting parks and washing out recreational trails, as well as invasive species extending their ranges, due to the state’s rising temperatures,

<sup>1</sup> 2018 PA 238: <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2017-SB-0302>

<sup>2</sup> Public Land Strategy 2021-2027: [https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79136\\_79262\\_80433---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79136_79262_80433---,00.html)

and decimating tree populations. The DNR already actively combats these problems, in a manner that does not include reducing the allowable timber harvest, and supporters of the bill argue that the DNR should continue to address climate change in ways that are best for the public lands and mineral rights the DNR is entrusted with, to ensure that Michiganders can enjoy them for years to come.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

The statutory changes proposed under House Bill 5388 are unlikely to directly or immediately change current costs or revenues for the DNR or local governments. It remains to be seen what fiscal impact, if any, the updated managed public land strategy has on the aforementioned costs or revenues in the future. Potential fiscal impacts and their respective extent(s) are likely to vary with plan implementation and any land management obstacles or issues that may arise in the future.

### **POSITIONS:**

Representatives of the Department of Natural Resources testified in support of the bill.  
(10-14-21)

The following entities indicated support for the bill:

- Michigan United Conservation Clubs (10-14-21)
- Michigan Environmental Council (10-14-21)
- Michigan League of Conservation Voters (10-14-21)
- The Nature Conservancy (10-28-21)
- Michigan Trout Unlimited (10-28-21)

Legislative Analyst: Emily S. Smith  
Fiscal Analyst: Austin Scott

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.