

June 30, 2009

The Honorable Governor Jennifer Granholm  
P.O. Box 30013  
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Governor Granholm,

The undersigned members of the Michigan sporting community would like to express our concern with legislation moving through the Michigan House of Representatives and Senate regarding horseback riding on state-owned public lands: House Bill 4610 (Moore) and Senate Bill 578 (Brown).

These bills are well-intentioned proposals to provide recreational access for equestrian riders in northern Michigan; however they have several unintended consequences that threaten the interests of the hunting, fishing and trapping community.

### **Funding for hunting, fishing and trapping opportunities in jeopardy**

This legislation disregards the underlying purpose for which certain lands in Michigan are purchased and managed – hunting, fishing and trapping. The collection and proper use of license fee dollars (state Game and Fish Funds) qualifies Michigan to receive federal matching Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) funds as a supplement for the management of game and fish in the state. (also known as Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson funds). WSFR funds are generated by an excise tax on sporting equipment. A formula based on land and water area as well as annual hunting, fishing, and trapping license sales establishes how much WSFR funding Michigan may receive each year. Michigan currently receives roughly \$25 million in WSFR funding annually.

If this legislation is enacted as currently written, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has already warned the Michigan Department of Natural Resources that our state could be considered in diversion of nearly \$25 million in WSFR funding annually. This would render Michigan ineligible to receive that funding in the future and could also force the state to reimburse the federal government for lands acquired with WSFR funding.

Now more than ever, we must be good stewards of our funding and our natural resources. We cannot support legislation that could cause us to lose an annual influx of federal dollars that provide for hunting, fishing and trapping – especially when those funds came from the pocketbooks of hunters, anglers, and trappers. We also cannot support legislation that might hinder the hunting, fishing and trapping opportunities on lands that were purchased with those activities as their primary use.

### **Land use management decisions should be made with scientific guidance on a case-by-case basis**

This legislation sets a dangerous precedent by mandating one type of use across the entire state, regardless of the character of the lands affected. Natural resource decisions should not be legislated; decisions should be science-based and made at the local level with the full involvement of scientists, professional managers and user groups.

House Bill 4610 (H-1), as passed out of committee would also write into statute that “[t]he use of trailways by pack and saddle animals is compatible with the management of land for the conservation of fish and wildlife.” Writing this statement into statute does not make it so. Our public lands are currently managed on a local level because different types of habitat and uses require different types of management strategies. In some areas the banks of a cold water trout stream may be easily eroded by

heavy traffic so traffic should be restricted. In some areas a clear-cut is the best way to provide for regeneration of the forest types most loved by white-tailed deer. There is no “one size-fits-all” for Michigan’s public lands.

Michigan has one of the largest holdings of state owned lands in the nation. There is room for all user groups on state lands, but those uses must be managed and coordinated based on the primary intent for which those lands were purchased and the scientific management of the habitat and natural resources present at those sites.

In the 1930s conservation leaders spearheaded the introduction of science-based management as the overriding concept guiding the use of our state’s natural resources. Sound scientific management is what distinguished Michigan a national leader in conservation then and it is what should continue to guide us today.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the sporting community’s concerns on this issue.

Sincerely,

John Novak, Anglers of the Au Sable  
Jim Miller, Flint River Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation  
Matthew LaCombe, Gibraltar Duck Hunters Association  
James Schramm, Great Lakes Council of the Federation of Fly Fishers  
Joe Burke, Huron Pointe Sportsmen’s Association  
Kris Matthew, Huron Valley Conservation Association  
Dick Ungelbach, Livingston County Wildlife and Conservation Club  
Jim Fenner, Ludington Area Charter Boat Association  
Jim Trinklein, Michigan Association of Gamebird Breeders & Hunting Preserves  
Matt Pedigo, Michigan Bear Hunters Association  
Bruce Levey, Michigan Bow Hunters Association  
Denny Grinold, Michigan Charter Boat Association  
Bob Jacobsen, Michigan Conservation Foundation  
Drew Deters, Michigan Duck Hunters Association  
Dave Shefferly, Michigan Ducks Unlimited  
Dave Borgeson, Michigan Resource Stewards  
Andy Pelt, Michigan Steelhead & Salmon Fishermen’s Association  
Gary Schinske, Michigan Trappers Association  
Dr. Bryan Burroughs, Michigan Trout Unlimited  
Dennis Muchmore, Michigan United Conservation Clubs  
Jim Maturen, Michigan Wild Turkey Hunting Association  
Dave Bean, Mid Michigan United Sportsmen’s Alliance  
Carol Rose, Montmorency County Conservation Club  
Andy Buchsbaum, National Wildlife Federation  
Ray Hoobler, Pigeon River Country Association  
Leon Hank, Quality Deer Management Association, Michigan State Branch  
Thomas L. Heritier, Saginaw Field and Stream Club  
Michael C. Johnson, Sportsmen’s Club of Battle Creek  
Robert T. Bolog, Tri-County Sportsmen’s League  
John Walters, Trout Unlimited, Headwaters Chapter  
Paul Rose, Upper Black River Restoration Committee

cc:

Lt. Governor John Cherry  
Michigan Legislature  
Members of the Natural Resources Commission  
Rebecca Humphries, Director, Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
MUCC Board of Directors  
Members of the Michigan Conservation Coalition  
Tim Hughes, Legislative Director, Executive Office of the Governor  
Donna Stine, Policy Advisor, Executive Office of the Governor  
Nancy Krupiarz, Executive Director, Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance

Attachments:

- Land acquisition map of the Pigeon River Country State Forest
- Letter from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to MDNR re: Federal WSFR fund diversion issue with HB 4610
- MUCC Federal WSFR funding informational fact sheet