

Politicizing Natural Resources & Environmental Commissions & Advisory Groups Resolution of the Michigan Resource Stewards

Whereas: The Michigan Senate has passed legislation amending the Michigan Natural Resources & Environmental Protection Act, including Senate Bills 0652, 0653, and 0654, primarily directed to make changes in the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) arguably establishing an inordinantly high level level of regulated party influence and reducing the level of environmental justice , and

Whereas: The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and DEQ share a long history of close interaction; even existing as one Executive Branch department for a longer period of time than as separate departments, and can be described as “sister departments”, and

Whereas: The primary natural resources programs of the DNR, including fish, game, parks, and lands depend on a healthy environment and quality surface water, groundwater, wetlands, productive soils, and abundant publicly owned land, and

Whereas: The the public policy of the state concerning the administration and protection of public health and the environment is specifically identified in Section 51 of Article IV of the Michigan Constitution of 1963 which designates these resources of primary concern, and

Whereas: The the public policy of the state and the mandate to the legislature regarding administration and protection of natural resources is specifically identified in Section 52 of Article IV of the Michigan Constitution of 1963, which states:

“The conservation and development of the natural resources of the state are hereby declared to be of paramount public concern in the interest of the health, safety and general welfare of the people. The legislature shall provide for the protection of the air, water and other natural resources of the state from pollution, impairment and destruction.”

, and

Whereas: The the public policy of the state and the mandate to the legislature regarding conflict of interest is specifically identified in Section 10 of Article IV of the Michigan Constitution of 1963, which states:

“No member of the legislature nor any state officer shall be interested directly or indirectly in any contract with the state or any political subdivision thereof which shall cause a substantial conflict of interest.”

and, current legislation inherently establishes a system of public officers whose interest is inherently in conflict with the Michigan Constitution’s primary and paramount interest in the protection of air, water and other natural resources of the state, and,

Whereas: Economic interest, if not checked, will likely always prevail against natural resources interests without a firm commitment from the three branches of government to sustain these quality resources for future generations, with each branch of government checking the unconstitutional actions of another branch, and

Whereas: Governmental actions intentionally designed to increase regulated party, special interest, and lobbyist influence essentially strongly politicizes natural resources policy and likely reduces environmental and natural resources to a quality below the standard of primary, paramount concern established by the Michigan Constitution, and

Whereas: Governor Milliken, our longest serving Governor and a leader in environmental quality once noted how the, "web of politics and cultural values determines the way societies choose to interact with their environments";

further, "The simple truth is that Michigan has always been and will always be a 'quality of life' state...the quality of human life in Michigan depends on nature. The natural beauty of Michigan is much more than a source of pleasure and recreation. It shapes our values, molds our attitudes, feeds our spirits." That aforethought is now under the assault of economic interests that may only value the use and consumption of natural resources rather considering sustaining the value of natural resources and environment for present and future generations, and

Whereas: Decisions within the DNR and DEQ must be based upon sound science, though pseudo-science can often be purported to be science and given greater influence than warranted as evidenced by current legislation allowing the inclusion of its representatives on official state agency leadership, and

Whereas: Meaningful transparency and inclusion of all stakeholders is paramount, especially those lacking the economic resources to equally influence or receive justice, to long term environment and natural resources sustainability, and

Whereas: The various government investigations related to the Flint Water Crisis, though not directed expressly at the Michigan DNR, concluded a need for considerable, meaningful "cultural change" in Michigan government to refocus and avoid environmental and natural tragedies. A noteworthy conclusion was:

"The Governor must assume the leadership of, and hold state departments accountable for, long-term implementation of the recommendations in this report, including but not limited to the need for cultural changes across multiple state agencies."

, and be it therefore

RESOLVED: That the Attorney General, Governor and the Michigan Natural Resources Commission (NRC) influence and discourage the arguably unconstitutional efforts to promote unrestrained and harmful natural resource use and discourage the promotion of economic interests of the regulated over the health and welfare of the general public, and

RESOLVED: That the NRC publicly take a position on legislative actions affecting the environment and natural resources which directly or indirectly impact upon the environment on which natural resources sustainability and conservation depend, and

RESOLVED: That the Governor, Attorney General and NRC promote the development of improved methods for the general public to provide meaningful input related to environmental policy and decision making as recommended by various government investigations related to the Flint Water Crisis, and be it finally

RESOLVED: That the NRC develop a policy to publically interact with the DEQ and establish positions on legislation tending to impact the DNR, DEQ, and conservation community concurrently,

APPROVED, Unanimously, by the membership on the ____ day of May, 2018.

Signed _____