



PROTECTING PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS

Michigan is rich with pristine natural areas that should be preserved and protected for future generations. In Michigan, we have long understood the importance of vibrant parks and public lands to our economy and our way of life. Through the establishment of Michigan's park system and decades of conservation work, our state has become known as a destination for seemingly endless opportunities to enjoy the outdoors.

BACKGROUND

Michigan's parks and public lands spur tourism and generate millions in revenue annually:

- Michigan has **102 state parks** total.
- In 2012 and 2013 over 1 million camp spots were booked nightly in Michigan parks. In 2014, the nightly booked camping spots came in at 964,776.
- After Michigan launched a new program in 2010 called the Recreation Passport that funds Michigan parks through optional license plate fees, **nearly 25 percent of Michigan motorists opted in immediately**. That percentage climbed to **28.5 percent in fiscal 2014**.

However, the legacy of conserving and protecting Michigan's natural areas is slipping away. In recent years, the legislature has sought to hamstring the protection of public lands in Michigan by arbitrarily capping the amount of land the state can own and trying to prevent the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) from using proven, science-based management practices. And even with the success of the Recreation Passport funding, Michigan's park system still faces more than \$300 million in deferred capital improvement projects.

ACTIONS NEEDED TO PROTECT PUBLIC LANDS:

- The Michigan Legislature should stop any effort to prohibit the DNR from managing public lands in order to conserve and enhance the biological diversity of Michigan's natural areas.
- The Michigan Legislature should prevent any attempt to force the DNR to list large portions of Michigan's public lands as "surplus" and therefore eligible for sale.
- The Michigan Legislature should remove the cap on the amount of land Michigan can own and provide legislative approval to the DNR's statewide public land policy.
- The Michigan Legislature should ensure that oil, gas and mineral revenues continue to fund acquisition and permanent protection of public lands through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and the Michigan State Parks Endowment Fund.
- The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) should improve stewardship of existing public lands by acting on pre-existing proposals for special land designations as natural, scenic, ecologically significant, or wilderness areas
- The DNR should prevent efforts to drill and mine under Michigan's state parks, including Hartwick Pines and Porcupine Wilderness.