



● **UNCERTAIN FUTURE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS**

- **The effectiveness of environmental protections at the federal, state, and local levels is fundamentally dependent on the amount of funding support allocated for the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). With the impending budgetary deficit caused by the COVID crisis, Michigan lawmakers need to ensure that these agencies have the necessary funding to do their job - protecting the health and wellness of our communities and the natural resources on which we depend.**

Under-funding Michigan's Environmental Programs

Michigan's most critical environmental programs are funded at both the federal and state level. In addition to chronic underfunding, the COVID crisis makes the future funding for critical environmental programming in Michigan uncertain. At the state level alone, Michigan projects a \$2.5 billion budget deficit for fiscal year 2021.

As we look towards the future, we must ensure that we maintain critical investments in our water and energy infrastructure, not only to protect our public health during the pandemic, but also to help lead a green economic recovery.

The Department of Natural Resources

The DNR is responsible for the conservation, protection, management, use, and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources. Most of the DNR's funding, 70 percent, comes from restricted state sources — such as revenues from hunting and fishing licenses, the federal government, the sale of oil and gas leases, and the extraction of minerals on state lands, and related royalties.

- Despite the success of Michigan's Recreation Passport in generating funding for Michigan's state parks, our park system still faces more than a \$250 million backlog in deferred capital improvement projects.
- Michigan's Natural Resource Trust Fund (NRTF) is used exclusively to purchase land for conservation and the protection of natural features and for increased public access and recreation. The Trust Fund has awarded more than \$1 billion for trails, parks, boat launches and other projects in every county in Michigan since 1976. The NRTF is capped at \$500 million, which Michigan hit in 2011. Michigan voters will have the opportunity to increase the NRTF cap to \$800 million in the 2020 election.

The Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE)

EGLE, formerly known as the Department of Environmental Quality, was created by Governor Whitmer to increase visibility to several environmental areas previously uncaptured by the DEQ. EGLE works to reduce public health and environmental risks, assists Michigan communities in addressing infrastructure needs, and builds partnerships to address Michigan's environmental issues. Compared to the DNR, EGLE receives its largest share of funding from the federal government.

The Renew Michigan Fund, signed into law by Governor Snyder, currently acts as a primary source of funding (\$69 million annually) for several important environmental programs. The Fund is financed through income taxes, and it is earmarked for expenditure on environmental remediation, recycling, and waste management. As certain state funded programs face chronic underfunding, the problem will now be exacerbated by the COVID 19 economic downturn. As a result, crucial programs that protect Michigan's public health and environmental remediation may be at risk.



Actions Needed to Secure Funding for Environmental Programs

- The Governor and Michigan Legislature should direct more general fund dollars to EGLE and MDNR, allowing the agency to reach staffing levels better suited for serving the public and protecting the environment - dam safety, water withdrawals, CAFO inspectors, shoreline protection, etc. - the state of Michigan needs more boots on the ground implementing existing policies and programs.
- The Michigan Legislature should work to sustainably fund the important offices recently added to EGLE, including the Office of Climate and Energy, the Office of the Great Lakes, and the Environmental Justice Public Advocate.
- The Michigan Legislature should move the recreation passport program to an opt-out program so Michiganders are automatically enrolled to receive a recreation passport with the choice to decline if they choose; alternatively the \$12 nominal fee could be raised sufficiently to close the capital repairs backlog over a reasonable amount of time.
- In November 2020 Michigan voters should raise the cap on the Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund (NRTF) to ensure its funding continues to be directed only to NRTF board approved projects. The Trust Fund Board should continue funding quality acquisition projects with a new emphasis on climate mitigation and resilience, ecological diversity, and habitat protection.