

Water, Air and Land At Risk With Deep Budget Cuts

Groups Call For Veto, Say Pure Michigan Ads Should Be Dropped Feds Brought In To Take Over Enforcement

LANSING, MI--Michigan's two largest environmental groups said today that the elimination of the state's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), along with deep cuts in environmental funding by the Legislature, means the state has effectively turned over Michigan's natural resources to polluters.

Sierra Club and Clean Water Action called on the governor to veto the joint DEQ and Department of Natural Resources budget and said that if state government fails to fund critical air and water programs in the days ahead, the federal Environmental Protection Agency should take over all water and air quality enforcement and permitting activities.

"It's open season on Michigan's water, air and land, and from a budget standpoint entirely unnecessary. There were other choices," said **Cyndi Roper of Clean Water Action**. "It is not an exaggeration to say the Legislature has completely bent to the will of corporate polluters who saw an opportunity in this budget crisis to destroy environmental protection in this state. It's a complete failure of leadership from both political parties."

Since 1996 the DEQ has seen funding adjusted for inflation decrease by \$156.9 million, reflecting a disproportionate drop in budgets compared to other parts of state government.

"With the Legislature's cuts this week we will now see even more polluted rivers and beaches, dirtier air, less wildlife and more toxic waste," said **Anne Woiwode, Michigan Director of Sierra Club**. "Michigan's tourism economy will suffer and residents will get sicker. It's time to pull the Pure Michigan ads off TV or else someone's going to file a complaint charging the state with deceptive advertising."

With Tuesday's action by the House, the Legislature, with Governor Granholm's support, has now voted to eliminate the Department of Environmental Quality and transfer all of its programs to the Department of Natural Resources, while cutting funding for 2010 by \$195.6 million.

Lawmakers yesterday took a budget axe to water, air and other environmental programs. Dozens of environmental and natural resource enforcement officers will be cut from an already barebones enforcement staff. Moreover, the new DNR will not only take on what's left of environmental programs. It is also now shouldered with managing museums, art and library programs as part of the elimination of another state agency in the 2010 budget.

"Somehow the Legislature found \$6 million to fund the state fair, but Michigan's Great Lakes legacy is flushed down the drain," said **David Holtz of Progress Michigan**. "That's not Pure Michigan. That's pure B.S."

Said **Woiwode**: "Michigan residents have to wonder the next time a stash of barrels containing toxic chemicals are found in their neighborhood, will there be anyone to respond to the call for help? That's the DEQ's job. What will happen the next time toxic yellow fumes begin billowing out of a nearby factory? It's DEQ's job to respond to these emergencies. Already, funding cuts have prevented the DEQ from stopping disasters like the destruction of 12 miles of the Black River from an animal factory sewage discharge. What will happen with more cuts?"