



SIERRA
CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

Position Statement

SB 248 – Cap on Land Acquisition for DNR

Sierra Club urges legislators to vote NO on SB 248, a bill that would prevent the Michigan Department of Natural Resources from increasing total public land acreage, even to provide public access for tourism, hunting, fishing and recreational uses or to support Michigan's resource-based economy.

Votes pertaining to this bill will be included in the Sierra Club's legislative scorecard.

Issue Background

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (NRTF) was created in the early 1980's when Michigan voters decided that revenues from the leasing of state owned mineral rights should be constitutionally dedicated to purchasing natural resource lands to be managed by the Department of Natural Resources. Mineral leasing revenues to the state will eventually come to an end, and visionary Michigan leaders understood that purchasing land was the ideal way to provide future generations the opportunity to hunt, fish, hike and bird watch on public lands, as well as to protect water quality and provide habitat to meet our state's future needs. These public lands belong to all Michiganders.

SB 248 (Casperson) would undermine the will of Michigan's voters by requiring that whenever the Michigan Department of Natural Resources acquires land in excess of the acreage cap established in the legislation (approximately what we own now), the state would be required to sell off an equal amount of public land somewhere in the system. SB 248 will artificially limit the state's ability to "create management efficiencies (through the purchase of inholdings), protect natural resources and public access, and help grow the resource-based economy, including the timber industry and tourism in the state." The state would have great difficulty acquiring land to create better hunting access in southern lower Michigan or perform more efficient forest management in the Upper Peninsula if SB 248 is enacted.

SB 248 fails to consider the interests of the Michigan citizens who value access to our state's natural resources or the benefits of state-owned land to local communities. Resource-based jobs, tourism, and limited need for local services are just a few examples of the benefits these lands provide.

The Legislature should not reduce the DNR's ability to protect our natural resources and provide public access to these resources. Sierra Club urges you to vote NO on SB 248.

*Please contact the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter office at (517) 484-2372 for more information.
May 25, 2011*