



MICHIGAN UNITED CONSERVATION CLUBS

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May 9, 2016

RE: Comments on House Bill 5275/Senate Bill 839

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this bill before the Senate Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee.

Michigan is blessed with more than 4 million acres of public land and the greatest diversity of outdoor recreation opportunities in the country. The various uses of these lands need to be balanced and there is plenty of room for everyone, though not all uses are compatible with each other at the same place and time. However, the use of hunter and angler dollars, whether it's to buy land or maintain the habitat, should not be diverted to manage for other uses.

MUCC would like to offer the following comments, support, and suggestions for amendments to this legislation.

- MUCC supports the concept of allowing pack and saddle animals to retrieve large game from public lands, as this is part of a wildlife-based activity, as well as the speed restriction of 5 mph for ORV's retrieving large game from public land, **PROVIDED that such allowances remain subject to DNR land use orders and individual state forest management plans.**
- MUCC also supports the concept of requiring the DNR to inventory our forest roads. **This has already been incorporated into the DNR Managed Land Strategy (2013) as a measurable objective for providing access to outdoor recreation opportunities:** "Completion of a road plan that ensures motorized and non-motorized access to public land." While we support implementing specific provisions of the DNR Managed Land Strategy, it was intended to be a comprehensive plan—the Legislature should pass clean legislation to approve the DNR Managed Land Strategy that it required of the DNR through PA 240 of 2012 and lift the land cap on northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula that it conditioned on its own approval of the plan under the same legislation.
- The USFS has successfully completed a component of this type of inventory with their Motor Vehicle Use Maps, which are available online, to communicate to the public where they are allowed to drive within the National Forest System. **This effort will necessarily require a substantial amount of staff time and some investment in technology to complete this initiative.** We strongly encourage you to support General Fund/General Purpose funding over the implementation period to support this effort.

- MUCC's biggest concern is that this legislation changes an assumed "closed unless open" policy for forest roads in the Northern Lower Peninsula immediately upon enactment to "open unless closed," similar to the Upper Peninsula. **This may put us our State Forest dual certification in jeopardy and potentially put Michigan in a diversion situation with regards to Pittman Robertson and Game and Fish purchased lands if we suddenly allow these roads to open that may be closed to protect sensitive wildlife, hunting and fishing, and habitats on public lands.** The DNR will need sufficient time to prepare orders to close roads that must remained closed for these purposes, and given the enhanced public notification requirements, we feel that this will require *at least* a year after the inventory of forest roads is completed. Suggested amendment language is listed below.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our suggestions. We are happy to review revised language in advance of moving these bills out of committee.

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Suggested bill amendments;

- HB 5275, page 5 line 22: adding "**BY DECEMBER 31, 2019,**"