Director of the Department of Natural Resources & Environment Questions

1. How do you plan on addressing both Environmental Protection and Natural Resources issues within the new Department? What will be your priorities in both of these areas?

2. How do you see the NRC role changing given the dual nature of the focus of the NRC (to cover all issues within the purview of the DNRE)? What has been the reaction of Commissioners to this issue?

3. Funding is a critical component to the success of the Department. With the present economy and the lack of support for new fees, how do you plan on gaining support for adequate funding? What ideas do you have for new funding approaches?

4. Field decisions play an important role in the success of the Department and have been viewed as a problem with the old DEQ. What improvements do you plan to make in this area? How do you plan to make agency decisions more consistent throughout the state?

5. All state agencies need to do more with less; therefore, they will have to rely upon others to do some of the work. What partnerships do you envision in this regard?

6. Are you concerned about the volatility that wholesale reorganizations force upon a state agency? State employees are forced into new relationships, asked to perform different tasks, etc—how do you see the most recent reorganization affecting the morale of the agency and the long term success of the department?

7. Can you envision an eventual combination of this department with the Department of Agriculture?

8. What leadership and management qualities do you believe that the DNRE Director should possess? Of those qualities, what is the single most important quality?

9. What are the key risks facing the long term sustainability of our natural resources?

10. Current law gives the legislature authority to veto any DNR-planned sale of state park land or wilderness areas. Do you think the legislature should have oversight like this? Why?

11. What role do you think the NRC needs to play in the Governor's selection of a director for the DNRE?

12. How do you plan to get more of Michigan's youth involved in outdoor activities?

13. How do you plan to accommodate the needs of groups that the department has placed restrictions upon (i.e. access to land locked property, equestrian trails, slow clean up process, and public access to lakes have all been issues in the past)?

14. How do you achieve a balance between public access and conservation and protection of private property rights? What factors do you weigh in reaching this balance?

Director of the Department of Natural Resources & Environment Questions

1. **How do you plan on addressing both Environmental Protection and Natural Resources issues within the new Department? What will be your priorities in both of these areas?**

   Michigan's natural resources and environment are the calling card for Michigan's future. This state has unparalleled natural resources providing for tremendous quality of life for our citizens and visitors. The new agency will take an ecosystem approach to managing our resources and environment. We will appoint Regional Directors to work with local communities, citizens and groups to bring our program responsibilities into focus at the local level. We will look at environmental protection and resource management as a hand in glove relationship.

   Priorities in natural resource management will be to sustainably manage our resources while promoting outdoor recreational use. Michigan enjoys tremendous natural resources, abundant water, public land, trails, wildlife, forests and fish. We need to continue to reach out with our partners to promote outdoor recreation, increase our efforts to build partnerships with local communities, and promote all that Michigan has to offer.

   In the environmental programs, we are rethinking how we do business. We need to improve our response time in processing permits. Regulations for minor projects, with little risk, are being moved to self reporting. Permits are no longer required for ongoing operations, such as marinas. We are reaching out to industry to help us design processes that work for them and meeting state and federal legislative requirements.

2. **How do you see the NRC role changing given the dual nature of the focus of the NRC (to cover all issues within the purview of the DNRE)? What has been the reaction of Commissioners to this issue?**

   The NRC will not have oversight of environmental regulations or appeal authority for Department decisions. The NRC clearly understands and supports its role. The NRC has advised me on its concerns or questions that fell under the Director's authority in the past, and we have used a public process to discuss those concerns. I plan to continue to operate in the same manner for resource issues.

3. **Funding is a critical component to the success of the Department. With the present economy and the lack of support for new fees, how do you plan on gaining support for adequate funding? What ideas do you have for new funding approaches?**

   Our user pay approach to conservation and environmental program funding is not working well. While it has been highly successful, when used in addition to General Fund support, the vast majority of the Department funding only comes from fees for certain activities or permits. As a result, only a portion of our users or permit applicants pay for fees, and this puts an unfair burden on these users. We need to broaden the base of individuals who contribute to natural resource and environmental management. I believe there is opportunity to use the future revenue we will be seeing from metallic mineral mining and earmark it for environmental protection and natural resource management. Michigan was a leader in developing this concept with the Natural Resources Trust Fund, which uses the revenue from oil and gas to invest in lands and outdoor recreation.

4. **Field decisions play an important role in the success of the Department and have been viewed as a problem with the old DEQ. What improvements do you plan to make in this area? How do you plan to make agency decisions more consistent throughout the state?**

   First, I am making a big effort to meet and talk to business and industry leaders to hear their concerns. I have asked them to work with us as we take a critical look at how we do business. I will encourage employees to learn more about the businesses they regulate and work to develop a dialogue, rather than holding these businesses at arm's length. In addition, I am filling Regional Director positions which will be charged with the responsibility to work with local communities, legislators, and citizens in their area to solve problems. The programs will still be run through line divisions, to ensure uniformity of programs, but Regional Directors will provide assistance to resolve issues at the local level. In programs where inconsistencies have been a complaint, we will be reviewing our authorities for guidance on how decisions should be made and the intent of the legislation. Where the legislation is not clear or needs updating, we will be working with the legislature to bring forward reform.

   I strongly believe that the Department's credibility rides on the shoulders of the employees who serve the people of this state and work for the agency. Holding employees accountable for a helpful attitude and recognizing good employee behavior, such as problem solving, needs to be at the heart of the culture of this agency. These are behaviors I support and recognize and will work to instill in the DNRE.

5. **All state agencies need to do more with less; therefore, they will have to rely upon others to do some of the work. What partnerships do you envision in this regard?**

   I have actually begun the conversation with the conservation community on how we should work in the future. Groups such as The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, the Heart of the Lakes, sporting industry, and local groups all can play a major role in protecting and managing what we hold dear in this state. By developing shared visions, and identify priorities, it allows us to develop working partnerships with groups to be campground hosts, adopt public land, host events, run mentorship programs, share marketing information, and help inform our publics of key issues. As a government agency, we need to think about what needs to be done, and then reach out to our partners to see if they can assist in helping us. From collection of data to making our facilities more inviting, our citizens and businesses can have a key role.

6. **Are you concerned about the volatility that wholesale reorganizations force upon a state agency? State employees are forced into new relationships, asked to perform different tasks, etc—how do you see the most recent reorganization affecting the morale of the agency and the long term success of the department?**

   Restructuring and reorganization are not new to these departments. Recently the DNR reorganized to accept programs from HAL. The DEQ eliminated divisions due to funding shortfalls. This latest restructuring provides great opportunity to protect Michigan's abundant natural resources while improving processes and decision making. We, collectively, have the ability to make the new agency better than the sum of the parts, just like I believe DNR and HAL coming together improved programs in both directions. Getting the new structure in place, leaders in leadership roles and business processes in place is a priority and will lend

stability. Not all employees find change difficult, but by giving employees things they can work on to make change work for them, they are more comfortable, secure and can embrace it. Paramount, employees need to be kept in the loop.

7. **Can you envision an eventual combination of this department with the Department of Agriculture?**

   No, not at this time. The Michigan Department of Agriculture is an agency that advocates for agriculture but also does enforcement work. Despite this dual role, it is trusted by the agricultural community. We in DNRE should learn from their model. However, the trust that the agricultural community feels for MDA, does not extend to the DNRE yet. My goal is that it does someday. Then further consolidation may be appropriate, but right now agriculture is a bright spot in our economy and we need to keep it that way.

8. **What leadership and management qualities do you believe that the DNRE Director should possess? Of those qualities, what is the single most important quality?**

   The Director of the DNRE needs to be a good communicator – to listen well and be able to clearly articulate issues, to be able to inspire employees to do their very best work, despite the difficult times. The Director needs to be able to build a management team and foster trust and confidence that allows managers to take risks and solve problems at their levels. Most importantly, the Director needs to be a trusted conservationist, who cares about Michigan, participates in outdoor activities, and shares the passion that citizens have for Michigan's natural resources and environment.

9. **What are the key risks facing the long term sustainability of our natural resources?**

   I believe that invasive species and disease are the biggest risks facing our natural resources.

10. **Current law gives the legislature authority to veto any DNR-planned sale of state park land or wilderness areas. Do you think the legislature should have oversight like this? Why?**

    Yes, I do believe the legislature should have oversight. Our state parks and wilderness areas were created by the legislature and belong to the people of this state. Any decision to sell an area must be weighed very carefully and go through the same level of oversight as was used to designate the area.

11. **What role do you think the NRC needs to play in the Governor's selection of a director for the DNRE?**

    As the decision making body for fishing and hunting regulations and as oversight of state parks, the NRC and Director must work hand in glove. That requires a level of trust, respect, and shared vision. I hope all future Governors include the NRC in their decision-making process to hire the very best Directors they can find in the years ahead.

12. How do you plan to get more youth involved in outdoor activities?

I plan to continue developing partnerships with outside organizations to encourage mentoring opportunities and educational efforts to get youth outside. In addition, the Department and our Commission will look to develop special youth opportunities in both the traditional and nontraditional outdoor recreational activities.

13. How do you plan to accommodate the needs of groups that the department has placed restrictions upon (i.e. access to land locked property, equestrian trails, slow clean up process, and public access to lakes have all been issues in the past)?

In Michigan, we have built a tremendous public land base using multiple funding sources. While Michigan has vast public land holdings, some of the funding sources we have used to buy public lands come with restrictions that have not always been understood by our employees or the public. Our Regional Citizens Advisory Councils will provide a forum for us to discuss these issues. In using these restricted funds, we must recognize that these lands cannot be all things to all people. Our public has invested in building a public land base, but we still have numerous in-holdings that must be a priority for acquisition, so that conflicts over access, trespass and user/owner conflicts can be reduced. The Department has reviewed all of our state land project areas, rededicated the boundaries, and is disposing of low priority lands in order to invest in holdings of priority projects.

Likewise, with programs, such as the clean-up program, we must reprioritize our programs and look for creative ways to accomplish as much as possible within our funding levels. The Department needs to be more responsive and learn to be more nimble in making these changes and keeping Michigan's current priorities at the forefront of our operations.

14. How do you achieve a balance between public access and conservation and protection of private property rights? What factors do you weigh in reaching this balance?

First we look to the law. In many cases, legislative intent and property rights are set out in statute or previous court cases. The Department of Natural Resources & Environment works very closely with the Attorney General's office to ensure we stay well within the law and are not inappropriately taking away private property rights.