



May 21, 2024

RE: Increased State Investment in Wetland Restoration

Senator Anthony,

Wetland restoration is a critically important activity here in Michigan, where we have lost close to 50% of all wetland acres that existed on our landscape prior to European settlement. These forms of natural infrastructure provide essential ecosystem services such as flood abatement, water quality improvement, groundwater recharge and carbon sequestration, in addition to providing critical habitat for numerous threatened and endangered species. Furthermore, Michigan’s wetlands support nearly all of our state’s economically significant game and fish species such as waterfowl, pheasant, deer, northern pike and many more. Despite the important role wetlands play for Michigan’s citizens and our fish and wildlife, we are failing to adequately invest in their restoration. Thankfully, we can do something about it and make Michigan a leader in wetland conservation. To that end, we request your support for robust funding for the wetland restoration line-item contained in the Michigan Department of Natural Resources budget to support accelerated wetland restoration across the state. This would build off the investments made last year and help set a precedent for year over year investment into one of our most important natural ecosystems.

A recently released report by the Alliance for the Great Lakes indicates that at current conservation investment levels, there is no pathway to achieve the 40% nonpoint source phosphorous reduction target for Lake Erie agreed to by the state in 2015. The report shows that significant increases in soil and water conservation is necessary, with significant emphasis on the installation of wetlands in strategic areas to capture sediment before it enters Lake Erie. Saginaw Bay is plagued by similar water quality challenges and therefore must also be a focus of any future wetland conservation efforts.

We appreciate your consideration of this important issue and would like to reiterate a few additional points of interest further substantiating more aggressive wetland conservation efforts here in Michigan:

- Harmful algal blooms (HABs) in Lake Erie and the Saginaw Bay compromise Michigan’s \$7 billion Great Lakes sportfishing industry, with up to 21,000 angling trips in Lake Erie cancelled due to HABs in 2019 alone.



- In agriculture-dominated landscapes, strategically placed wetland restorations to intercept run-off is a widely accepted solution to improving water quality, with evidence showing 30%-80% reductions in loading of agricultural nutrients.
- Increased state wetland investments will be utilized to leverage additional federal and private funds to further amplify the work at a rate of 2:1 or better.

Investment in wetlands represents a reasonable, cost-effective, and multi-benefit producing approach to improving Michigan's freshwater resources, soils, fish and wildlife populations, and recreational opportunities. This investment would also help make our communities more resilient to extreme weather events that damage communities year after year. While we understand there are numerous other investments needed in Michigan's natural resources, we would like to point to the fact that wetland conservation has demonstrable success at generating non-state match funding sources and diverse partnerships. For all the above stated reasons, we strongly believe that increased wetland funding deserves your endorsement. Thank you again for taking the time to consider our views and for recognizing the importance of future funding for Michigan's precious wetland resources.

Sincerely,

Ducks Unlimited
 National Wildlife Federation
 Alliance for the Great Lakes
 Michigan Environmental Council
 Audubon Great Lakes
 Michigan United Conservation Clubs
 Southeast Michigan Council of Governments
 Safari Club International
 Michigan Aggregates Association
 Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society
 Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever
 Michigan Steelhead & Salmon Fishermen's Association
 Six Rivers Land Conservancy