



Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 9, 2009

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Governor's Budget: Environmental Protections Hung Out to Dry

Fresh from endangering Michigan's lakes and streams by proposing to give up the state's wetlands protection program, Gov. Jennifer Granholm has suggested further crippling cuts to environmental protection and public health in her 2010 budget.

The budget contains cuts to many programs necessary to protect Michigan's vital natural resources.

"We understand that the economy is terrible and times are very tough," said Dr. Grenetta Thomassey, policy director at Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. "However, that does not mean that environmental protections and public health should be hung out to dry now, especially since the DEQ budget has already been sacrificed over the past 7 years. It's time to look elsewhere, and we have been evaluating potential alternatives and options."

She added, "We believe many solutions have not been fully considered by the DEQ and Governor's office, and we insist that they start thinking about different approaches. Our state constitution compels them to do so, and it's time to turn the hatchet on other wasteful expenditures. Enough is enough."

The Department of Environmental Quality has seen state general fund support erode from a high of over \$101 million in FY 2002 to \$44.4 million in FY 2009, representing a 68 percent reduction in general fund support. Shamefully, Michigan ranks 47th out of the 48 contiguous states for conservation and environmental protection efforts on a per capita spending basis, according to a report by the Land Policy Institute at Michigan State University. To make matters worse, the Governor proposed an additional \$11.3 million be cut from the DEQ's general fund appropriation, reducing the overall general fund support to \$33.1 million in 2010. This is a 24% cut, which is a higher cut than any another state department faces.

The Great Lakes are some of the most magnificent natural resources on Earth, holding nearly 20% of the planet's fresh surface water. In addition to the Lakes themselves, the region is richly endowed with high quality inland lakes, expansive forests, blue-ribbon trout streams, prairies, bogs, and the largest freshwater coastal wetlands system on Earth. The Michigan Department of Environment Quality is the key agency responsible to the people of Michigan for upholding the

state's constitution and administering laws that regulate activities in Michigan's most treasured natural resources. In order for the DEQ to live up to this obligation, adequate financial support must be provided. However, we are seeing the exact opposite occur, placing our magnificent resources at risk.

"The Michigan Legislature and the Governor hold a responsibility to the citizens of Michigan to ensure that the programs which provide essential protections to our water resources are enhanced and maintained," said Jennifer McKay, policy specialist at Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. "In order for the DEQ to live up to its commitment, the legislature must provide adequate resources. Providing adequate resources through increased General Funds to the DEQ is an investment in Michigan's most treasured resources—the Great Lakes and our inland lakes, rivers, and wetlands."

***About Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council:** Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council speaks for our members including full-time and seasonal residents, lake associations, and businesses. We work to maintain the environmental integrity and economic and aesthetic values of lakes, streams, wetlands, and ground water in Northern Michigan, as well as statewide and throughout the Great Lakes Basin. As the lead organization for water resources protection in Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, and Emmet Counties, the Watershed Council is working to preserve the heritage of Northern Michigan – a tradition built around our magnificent waters.*

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