

The following statement is from: Sierra Club – Michigan Chapter, Clean Water Action, Michigan Environmental Council, Michigan League of Conservation Voters and Ecology Center.

Thursday October 8th, 2009

Today the environmental community stands behind Governor Granholm's actions to recombine the Departments of Natural Resources and Environmental Quality. We believe that the newly formed Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) can be a cutting-edge environmental protection agency for the 21st Century that can serve as a model for other states and countries. This is a chance for Michigan to reclaim our lost leadership role in managing our truly spectacular natural resources.

The recombination, however, should not be seen as a panacea for our budgetary problems. Monetary resources for protecting Michigan's environment have fallen to a critically low, unsustainable level and resources are needed to ensure this new agency can do its job. Finding new, sustainable sources of revenue is critical to ensure that the vision of Pure Michigan is real.

In addition to adequately funding the DNRE, there are five principles that must be at the core of the new agency's functions:

- Public accountability and oversight to ensure the agency's effectiveness, including multiple triggers for review of decisions critical to protecting resources and public health.
- The agency must bring natural resource information systems into the 21st century, by utilizing on-line technology for permits, applications and other relevant processes.
- Utilize a holistic approach to environmental protection, focused on sustainability and ecosystem management and restoration.
- Revitalize the polluter-pay principle. Environmental protection agencies exist to protect the public from pollution. Polluters should pay their fair share.
- Integrate human and environmental health protection by focusing on the most vulnerable populations and resources, including children, pregnant women and low income communities. This can be done by focusing on cross-cutting initiatives like the Environmental Justice Executive Directive.

The environmental community looks forward to participating as a stakeholder that will work to create such an agency.