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Michigan's Natural Resources Trust Fund Under Attack

Committee okays raid on funding for public land

LANSING --- A bill that would raid the Natural Resources Trust Fund to pay for dredging the state's waterways passed through the Senate Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Committee today. State Senator John Moolenaar (R - Midland) introduced Senate Bill 229, and it passed by a vote of 5-2.

"The legislature continues to look at the Natural Resources Trust Fund as a piggy bank for any and every state budget challenge," said Jack Schmitt, Political Director for the Michigan League of Conservation Voters. "Michigan voters decided to safeguard NRTF money for a reason: to protect and preserve our natural resources for future generations."

The NRTF was expressly established to acquire and develop state parks and public land. The Constitution is clear that the NRTF is not to be used for ongoing maintenance projects, such as dredging. Michiganders intentionally placed the NRTF into the Constitution to protect the Fund from legislative raids and ensure future generations will always be able to enjoy our forests, beaches, lakes and streams. Today's vote rejects those intentions and pushes unconstitutional legislation forward.

"Without question, historically low water levels have led to a critical dredging need in Michigan's waterways and harbors," said Schmitt. "We support the balanced approach to this problem that has already passed the Senate with bipartisan support. There is no need to raid a popularly supported, constitutionally protected fund to address this critical need."

Last week, the Senate passed Senate Bill 233, on a 31-5 vote, to appropriate \$21 million for dredging projects throughout the state. The legislation would enact components of the emergency dredging proposal presented by Governor Snyder at last month's Executive Budget Presentation.

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Michigan League of Conservation Voters is Michigan's non-partisan political voice for land, air and water. Visit our website: <http://www.michiganlcv.org>.