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## DNR REPORT TO LEGISLATURE

House Bill 4029 as introduced  
First Analysis (2-10-93)

Sponsor: Rep. Tom Alley  
Committee: Conservation, Environment  
and Great Lakes Affairs

### ***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

Michigan's vast array of natural resources--the fresh water of its Great Lakes and many inland lakes and rivers, the expansive natural gas and oil wells found below its surface, and the huge tracts of forests that cover its northern areas--have been a source of pride and enjoyment for its citizens for many years. Responsibility for managing the state's resources and providing for their wise and beneficial use falls to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Since its creation in 1921 (as the Department of Conservation), the DNR has worked toward ensuring that the abundant resources available for one generation of the state's citizens will be protected and passed on to succeeding generations. Though the department began as an agency whose purpose primarily revolved around preserving the state's fish and game populations for future generations of sportsmen and women, its responsibilities have grown dramatically over the last 20 years. Today, the department's activities include, among other things, regulating the use of land by commercial developers and private property owners, providing for the safe disposal of solid and toxic wastes, regulating the amount of air and water pollution produced by the state's industries, and overseeing a billion dollar tourism industry. As demands on the department continue to grow, some people are concerned about the department's ability to set a cohesive and comprehensive policy of resource management for the state's future. For instance, while environmentalists wish to preserve the habitat of the state's wild areas, industrialists and commercial developers call for pro-growth policies enabling them to shore up the state's economy. In its attempts to please everyone and offend no one, the department seems to take positions which do just the opposite, leaving the public confused and, often, angry and frustrated. In order to better understand where the department is headed in its deliberations on resources management, some people believe a process is

needed to force the department to disclose certain information to the public concerning its policies and goals, as well as various other information. Legislation has been proposed that would require the DNR director to annually come before a joint legislative committee to disclose information concerning the department's policies and activities, as well as other pertinent DNR data.

### ***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

The bill would amend Public Act 17 of 1921, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) enabling act, to require the DNR director to appear before a joint meeting scheduled by the committees of the Senate and the House responsible for natural resources and environmental issues. At the meeting, the director would be required to submit the following information for the previous calendar year:

- \* a report on all policies of the DNR or the Commission of Natural Resources that had been developed or updated, with copies for committee members;
- \* a report on activities that the DNR had undertaken;
- \* if requested by one or more committee members, copies of any or all policies of the department and the commission; and
- \* a report on the amount received and expended by the state from hunter and angler license fees.

MCL 199.1a

### ***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

The Department of Natural Resources says the bill would not affect state or local budget expenditures. (2-10-93)

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## ***ARGUMENTS:***

### ***For:***

The DNR's huge responsibility of managing the state's many natural resources often requires it to lend an ear to a host of different special interests--from concerns raised by hunters and anglers about the state's fish and game opportunities, to calls by environmentalists for special protection for the state's wild life and natural areas, to requests by private landowners for building and development permits--which seems to pull the department in many directions at once. The department's apparent lack of a cohesive, unified policy on resource management only works to confuse the public and anger the very citizens who it seeks to serve. The bill would attempt to correct this problem by providing a public legislative forum in which the department would have to disclose any policies it developed in the previous calendar year. Also, the department would have to report on the amount of money the state received and expended from hunting and fishing license fees. Some people apparently feel recent figures released by the DNR to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service misrepresented the actual number of persons who held hunting licenses between 1989 and 1990. Though requiring the DNR director to come before a joint legislative committee certainly would not solve the many problems facing the department, it could help to give the public a better idea of where the department is headed in managing the state's natural resources.

The Department of Natural Resources has not yet taken a position on the bill. (2-9-93)

### ***Against:***

The bill would fail to accomplish anything by requiring the DNR director to come before a joint legislative committee to disclose policy goals. The policies established for managing the state's resources are determined by the Natural Resources Commission in its deliberations throughout any given year. If someone wished to discover what the department's policy was on different issues, he or she could attend the commission's meetings to discover just what those policies were. It seems that the bill's real purpose is not to discover the department's policies but rather to impose the will of the legislature on the way the department works to set policy and conduct its activities.

## ***POSITIONS:***

The Sierra Club - Mackinaw Chapter supports the bill. (2-9-93)

