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SFA**BILL ANALYSIS**

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Senate Bill 444 (Substitute S-1 as reported)
Sponsor: Senator Leon Stille
Committee: Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to require the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish an “adopt-a-trail” program allowing volunteer groups to assist in maintaining and enhancing Michigan trailways and rail-trails. (“Trailway” means a land corridor that features a broad trail capable of accommodating a variety of public recreation uses. “Michigan trailways” are designated by the Natural Resources Commission. The bill would define “rail-trail” as “a former railroad bed that is in public ownership and used as a trailway”.)

Volunteer groups in the proposed program could adopt any available Michigan trailway or rail-trail, or trailway or rail-trail segment, and could choose any one or more of the following activities: spring cleanups, environmental activities, accessibility projects, special events, trailway maintenance and development, public information and assistance, and/or training. The DNR would have to designate the activities to be performed by a volunteer group, and could provide for more than one group to adopt a trailway or trailway segment.

A volunteer group that wished to participate would have to apply to the DNR and agree that it would: participate for at least two-years; consist of at least six people who were 18 years of age or older (although volunteers could be under 18 if a group were a school or scout organization); contribute at least 400 service hours over a two-year period; and comply with other reasonable requirements of the DNR. While working on a project, volunteers would have the same civil immunity as DNR employees. A State park manager or a district forest manager could issue free camping permits to volunteers who were actively working on adopt-a-trail projects that lasted more than one day, and could waive park entry fees for volunteers entering State parks to work on adopt-a-trail projects.

The DNR would have to erect near the entrance of each Michigan trailway or rail-trail in the adopt-a-trail program or along the trailway an adopt-a-trail program sign with the name of the sponsoring organization for each group that had contributed at least 100 service hours by volunteers.

MCL 324.72101 et al.

Legislative Analyst: S. Margules

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have an indeterminate fiscal impact depending upon the amount of volunteer participation. The Department currently has an Adopt-a-Park program with approximately .5 FTE. This proposal would augment that program, and could result in indeterminate cost savings from volunteer trail improvements. Last year, “Adopt-a-Shoreline” and “Adopt-a-River” programs also were enacted.

Date Completed: 5-5-97

Fiscal Analyst: G. Cutler

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.