

Senators Birkholz, Van Woerkom, Kuipers, McManus and Jelinek offered the following resolution:

Senate Resolution No. 77.

A resolution to urge the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to increase efforts to provide notification and public education on rip currents in the Great Lakes.

Whereas, The Great Lakes are known for their beauty, power, and importance to life in this region. Less well known and understood are the dangers of rip currents, which threaten public safety and can cause deaths of swimmers at beaches along Michigan's shores; and

Whereas, Rip currents, which are sometimes mistakenly referred to as rip tides or undertows, are caused by offshore sandbars that break apart. The current that results can be very strong, taking even an Olympic-caliber swimmer swiftly away from the shore. The "rip" in the sandbar can be the result of high winds or large waves, and it can occur with absolutely no warning. Rip currents can last a few minutes, several hours, or even days. While there often is discoloration to the water that is swept away from the shore by the rip current, this is not always easy to see. A swimmer caught in a rip current can safely return to shore by swimming parallel to the shore, out of the rip current. However, this knowledge must be in place before such an incident occurs in order to prevent a tragedy; and

Whereas, There is clearly a need for greater public awareness among beach visitors to the Great Lakes. The National Weather Service plans to issue rip current warnings for Lakes Michigan and Huron. State parks will post warning flags based on the warnings: green for safe, yellow for caution, and red for unsafe conditions. Providing beach visitors with information on how to interpret the flags, recognize a rip current, and react if caught in one is essential public education. Signs posted at beaches can provide such information, as well as information on how to help someone caught in a rip current. Additional education is required for visitors at Michigan beaches not associated with a state park; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That we urge the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to increase efforts to provide notification and public education on rip currents in the Great Lakes; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Governor and the Director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.