

January 21, 2014

RE: SUPPORT FOR HB 5210

The Honorable Andrea LaFontaine, Chair
House Natural Resources Committee

Dear Chair LaFontaine and Members, House Natural Resources Committee:

On behalf of Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation Policy, thank you for this opportunity to voice support for House Bill 5210, legislation that would approve the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Managed Public Land Strategy (July 1, 2013) and lift the cap on the amount of land the state can own in northern lower and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Heart of the Lakes is the state association of Michigan's nonprofit land conservancies.

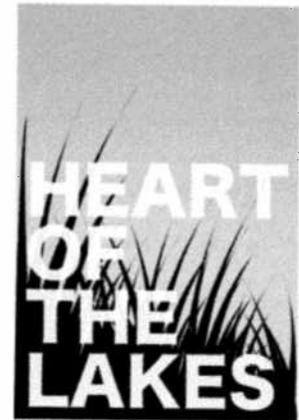
When questions were raised whether the state owned too much or too little land, Heart of the Lakes did not support setting an arbitrary limit on the number of acres managed by the DNR on the public's behalf. Instead, we argued that a better set of questions needed to be asked: What lands should the state own, where should they own them, and why? We also argued that not all state lands are equal (for example, state parks have different purposes than state forests) and that some areas of the state lacked sufficient public land access. We called for and fully supported the development of a land ownership strategy as a framework to help answer the what, where and why questions.

Therefore, we believe the Managed Public Lands Strategy puts us on the right policy path and will better serve all of the people of Michigan and the public lands entrusted to the DNR's care. It deserves your endorsement by passing HB 5210 as introduced.

Thank you.



Julie Stoneman
Associate Director



PO Box 1128
Bay City, MI 48706

Phone: 989.737.9543
www.heartofthelakes.org