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**Losing a Legacy: Why Michigan's Magnificent Places are at Risk
A Report on How Funding Cuts to the DNR and the DEQ Threaten Michigan's
Natural Resources**

(Lansing, MI, September 26, 2007) Michigan's state conservation agencies, the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Environmental Quality, are vastly and disproportionately under-funded, according to a new report released today by the Michigan League of Conservation Voters Education Fund. The report, which analyzes the state's fiscal budget over the last 25 years, finds that the Department of Natural Resource (DNR) and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) have suffered major cuts in critical funding. As a result, Michigan's Great Lakes, state lands, and wildlife are in peril.

The report is authored by Dave Dempsey, environmental policy aide, author, and Michigan LCV Education Fund consultant. Tom Clay, Director of State Affairs Emeritus with the Citizens Research Council of Michigan, assisted in the collection and analysis of the financial and employment data.

Key findings in the report outline that over the last decade these two state agencies have suffered more than their fair share of budget cuts, resulting in major losses of funding, causing the closing of campgrounds, and failures to clean up toxic contamination.

"As just one example of the importance of these departments to Michigan's future: currently the DEQ is working to drastically reduce mercury emissions that pollute our Great Lakes and threaten our way of life and children's health - a crucial milestone in Michigan's history. Without the proper DEQ funds and staff, programs such as these would be threatened and Michigan's Great Lakes could become an open dumping ground for polluters." said Kim Pargoff, Energy Advocate with Environment Michigan.

Howard Tanner, former Director of the DNR expressed his concern over the report's conclusions. "Michigan was once a leader on conservation and environmental protection of our vast natural resources. Somehow that trend has been reversed and our leadership in conservation has been tarnished. It is up to our leaders in Lansing to work together to return to our once proud legacy of environmental stewardship by properly funding the DNR and DEQ."

Some of the major findings of the report include:

- **Conservation Funding Slashed:** Since 2001, The DNR and DEQ departments have suffered a 62 percent decline in funding. This decline is not at all proportionate to overall declines in statewide funds: for the same period, total general fund spending dropped only 6 percent.
- **DNR and DEQ unfairly targeted:** No other state department has lost as much proportional support as DNR and DEQ.
- **Family vacationers bear consequences of budget cuts:** Cuts in this year's appropriation caused the agency to close 20 of its 138 state forest campgrounds early this summer.
- **Communities abandoned:** By next year, there will be no more funding for the state's contaminated site cleanup program. Without this program, thousands of toxic sites around the country will be left as is, posing serious public health and environmental risks.

In Saginaw, increased budget cuts to the DEQ would have consequences for local citizens. "The most pervasive toxic contamination in the state threatens Lake Huron. The DEQ has worked five years to bring the responsible party, the Dow Chemical Company, to a point where some dioxins and other toxics are being removed. What happens if the DEQ's budget is cut again? What happens to our rivers, our lakes, our drinking water, our fisheries, if our first line of defense is hamstrung by budget cuts," said Lone Tree Council Chairperson Terry Miller. "And the DEQ's Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative, an effort to deal with the shoreline muck, invasive species, and sewer overflows -- do we just tell people to hold their noses and hope?"

Given these major funding cuts, the Michigan League of Conservation Voters Education Fund along with dozens of environmental and conservation organizations are calling on the State Legislature and Governor Granholm to invest in Michigan's future and place Michigan's air, land, and water as a top priority for the prosperity of our state by providing the critical funding necessary to fully fund the DNR and DEQ.

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