

PRESS RELEASE  
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## Groups React to New Water Use Bills

*Coalition Criticizes Senate Bills as Falling Short, Calls for Protections for All Michigan's Waterways*

Lansing — The *Great Lakes, Great Michigan* coalition today responded to the many bills introduced in the House and Senate last week, clarifying the various packages of bills, and raising concerns about inadequate protections in the package of bills led by Senator Birkholz. The coalition is encouraged that legislation has been introduced, is working with Sen. Birkholz to strengthen the Senate package, and is hopeful that stronger protections will be passed this year.

“Our water is what makes Michigan a great place to live, but the Senate package falls short of what is needed to protect these waterways from irresponsible use,” said David Holtz, Michigan Director for Clean Water Action. “These bills give only temporary, weak protections for only a small amount of Michigan’s waterways.”

The Senate bills, as they are currently written, would:

- Give only temporary protections that would expire in less than two years,
- Apply only to trout streams, leaving the majority of our streams and waterways unprotected,
- Only consider impacts if they drastically altered the stream,
- Leave the public out of decisions impacting our waterways, and
- Provide no new protections against diversions from the Great Lakes basin.

Companion bills are expected to be introduced by House Republicans later this week.

“Unless you are a trout, you are left unprotected by the Birkholz package of bills. And trout are only protected until these laws sunset the summer after next,” stated Kelly Dardzinski of PIRGIM. “All of Michigan’s lakes, streams, and wetlands deserve protection, and our state can do much better than this.”

The *Great Lakes, Great Michigan* coalition—made up of 36 businesses, farmers, environmental groups, religious groups, and thousands of citizens—held a teleconference today to react to the packages of bills and clarify what the bills will actually do. The coalition released its plan for protecting Michigan’s waterways from unregulated water use this May. Among other things, the coalition platform would:

- Protect all of Michigan’s waterways from adverse impacts,
- Provide new protections against diversions of Great Lakes water,
- Involve communities in decisions regarding their lakes, rivers, and streams, and
- Require all large water users to practice water conservation and efficient use.

In contrast to the Birkholz package, the House introduced a strong bipartisan package of bills last week that was modeled after the *Great Lakes, Great Michigan* platform. Senator Brater plans to introduce similar strong and comprehensive legislation in the Senate this week.

“Large water users have long been able to treat Michigan’s waterways and the Great Lakes like their own, drying up wells, ponds, and wetlands, and even sending Michigan’s water to other states and far off places,” stated Cheryl Mendoza of the Alliance for the Great Lakes. “We need to pass strong, comprehensive laws in order to keep Michigan’s water at work for Michigan.”

“Our state has a historic opportunity to protect our waters for future generations,” added James Clift of Michigan Environmental Council. “We’re counting on our lawmakers to put our waters before politics and pass permanent protections for all of our waterways.”

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