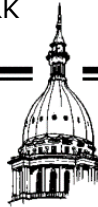




Senate Fiscal Agency
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BILL



ANALYSIS

Telephone: (517) 373-5383
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Senate Bill 154 (as reported without amendment)
Sponsor: Senator Goeff Hansen
Committee: Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

(as passed by the Senate)

Date Completed: 2-25-13

RATIONALE

In the early 1980s, Oceana County Commissioner William Field proposed that an abandoned railroad corridor running through the county be converted to a recreational trail, and worked for the next seven years to bring his idea to fruition. He evidently was inspired by a visit to Wisconsin, where he had the opportunity to visit a converted rail trail. After fellow county officials declined to support his proposal, Mr. Field decided to purchase the land himself and donate it to the State of Michigan for the creation of a linear park between the Cities of Hart and Montague. This gift of land, valued at \$225,000, served as the required match for a grant from the Natural Resources Trust Fund, which enabled development of the project. The 22-mile Hart-Montague Trail State Park opened to the public in 1991 and spurred a statewide rails-to-trails initiative. William Field passed away in 2005. As a tribute to him, it has been suggested that the park be renamed in his honor.

CONTENT

The bill would amend Part 741 (State Parks System) of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to rename the Hart-Montague Trail State Park the "William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Trail State Park".

MCL 324.74126

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

William Field persevered through considerable opposition to his rail-to-trail proposal, which some labeled "Field's Folly", to turn his vision into a reality. For his extraordinary efforts to create the Hart-Montague Trail State Park, the *Detroit News* named him a 1988 Michiganian of the Year and the Michigan United Conservation Clubs recognized him with a Special Conservation Award.

The Hart-Montague Trail has enriched the surrounding area and provided recreational opportunities for a variety of users, including walkers, bicyclists, and snowmobilers. In addition, the trail has stimulated economic development in the communities through which it passes, providing a stream of customers for small businesses such as restaurants, ice cream parlors, and bicycle repair and rental shops. The trail also has served as a model for reclaiming other abandoned rail lines, extending the positive impact of William Field's passion and dedication throughout the State.

Renaming in his honor the park that he worked so tirelessly to create would be a fitting tribute to William Field, his passion for civic affairs, and his love of West Michigan.

Legislative Analyst: Julie Cassidy

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: Josh Sefton

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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.