



Senate Fiscal Agency
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BILL ANALYSIS



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Senate Bills 1280 and 1281 (as enrolled)
Sponsor: Senator Patricia L. Birkholz (S.B. 1280)
Senator Tony Stamas (S.B. 1281)

PUBLIC ACTS 392 & 395 of 2004

Senate Committee: Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs
House Committee: Conservation and Outdoor Recreation

Date Completed: 4-4-05

RATIONALE

Michigan's State parks system has preserved much of the State's beaches, meadows, and forests for public use. At one time, the majority of the 96 parks' operating, maintenance, and capital improvement costs were covered by the State's General Fund. Beginning in 1980, however, General Fund support began decreasing, until it ended altogether in fiscal year 2003-04. Although user fees have increased and money has been spent from the State Parks Endowment Fund to make up the difference, the system increasingly has had to rely on volunteers to maintain trails, teach classes, and provide other services previously performed by paid employees. In 1992, a group called the Citizens Committee for Michigan State Parks provided a strategic plan for the State parks to the year 2020, but the committee was disbanded. Some people suggested that the citizens committee should be re-established to provide input into the parks' operations, and that those volunteers and employees working to continue providing services to visitors should be recognized.

Resources (DNR) to create a "Gem of the Parks" award to recognize key State parks for their contribution to the State parks system, a "Volunteer of the Year" award to recognize outstanding individuals who donate time or money to the system, and an "Employee of the Year" award to recognize outstanding employees of the State parks system.

The bills took effect on October 15, 2005.

Senate Bill 1280

Membership

The Citizens Advisory Committee for Michigan State Parks is created within the DNR. The Committee is to consist of 17 individuals appointed by the DNR Director with the advice of the Natural Resources Commission.

The first members were to be appointed within 60 days after the bill's effective date. Of the first members appointed, six are to serve for four years, six for three years, and five for two years. Subsequently appointed members will serve four-year terms.

Upon a majority vote of the members, the Committee may remove a member for incompetency, dereliction of duty, malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance in office, or any other good cause. A member must be removed from the Committee if he or she does not attend four consecutive Committee meetings.

CONTENT

Senate Bill 1280 amended Part 741 (State Parks System) of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to create the Citizens Committee for Michigan State Parks, and require the Committee to recommend parks policy, provide guidance, educate the public, and perform other tasks.

Senate Bill 1281 also amended Part 741 to require the Department of Natural

Members are to serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed for their actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties as Committee members.

Duties

The Committee must do all of the following:

- Advise and make recommendations to the Governor, the Commission, and the Legislature on State parks policy and provide guidance on State parks development, management, and planning issues.
- Seek the development of a broad variety of programs, facilities, and services for citizens using State parks.
- Inform and educate the public about the importance of and need for State parks.
- Strive to involve citizens in the planning and development of State parks.
- Strive to ensure that the facilities, programs, and projects are barrier-free and accessible to all citizens.
- Establish and maintain effective public relations regarding State parks, using all appropriate communications media.
- Advise on financial planning and pursue adequate budget support for State parks.
- Serve as a liaison and coordinate with other agencies to ensure a cooperative effort to provide the most effective and economical service possible at State parks.
- Evaluate the State parks' programs, facilities, services, and relationships periodically to assure that the Committee's goals and objectives are being achieved.
- Advise and make recommendations to the DNR on the Gem of the Parks Award, the State Parks Volunteer of the Year Award, and the State Parks Employee of the Year Award (established by Senate Bill 1281).

Procedures

The DNR Director must call the first Committee meeting, at which the Committee must elect from among its members a chairperson and other officers as it considers necessary or appropriate. After the first meeting, the Committee must meet at least twice a year, or more frequently at the call of the chair, or if requested by nine or more members.

Nine members constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at a Committee meeting. A majority of the members present and serving are required for official Committee action.

The chairperson of the Committee must ensure that all of its proposed policy positions are sent to Committee members at least one week before the meeting at which the policy positions are acted on. The Committee may adopt an emergency resolution that was not sent to members at least one week before a Committee meeting, but only upon the approval of three-quarters of those present at the meeting.

The Committee is subject to the Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

Senate Bill 1281

The bill requires the DNR to develop a program to facilitate the determination and presentation of the Gem of the Parks Award, the Volunteer of the Year Award, and the Employee of the Year Award. The awards must be made annually. The Department also must develop a set of standards to use in determining the recipients of the awards, with consideration given to the following:

- The contribution of the State park, volunteer, or employee to the preservation of the State's natural resources.
- The amount of any monetary donation.
- The length of time donated or the years of employment.
- The length of a long-term commitment to the preservation of the environment.

Annually, the Department must submit the names of the award recipients to the standing committees in the Senate and House responsible for natural resources matters.

MCL 324.74101 et al. (S.B. 1280)
324.74124 (S.B. 1281)

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

Senate Bill 1280 provides for a citizens advisory council that will, among other things, provide advice on financial planning and pursue adequate budget support for the parks. The Council will serve as an important reference for parks policy, as did the first Citizens Committee for Michigan State Parks appointed by the DNR Director in 1989. That Council, now defunct, developed Vision 2020, a strategic plan for Michigan State parks to the year 2020. Citizens again deserve to have a voice in park management and planning.

Senate Bill 1281 provides for recognition of the excellent work done by parks' volunteers and employees, as well as exceptional State parks. Because parks' staff and volunteers do so much for the benefit of the public, it is appropriate to acknowledge their contributions publicly with annual awards.

Legislative Analyst: J.P. Finet
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FISCAL IMPACT

Senate Bill 1280

The bill will result in minimal expenses related to reimbursement of actual and necessary expenses incurred by members of the Committee.

Senate Bill 1281

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

Fiscal Analyst: Jessica Runnels

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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.