



June 11, 2012

Re: Clean Water Action opposition to SB 1052

Dear Honorable Members of the House Natural Resources, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Committee,

On behalf of our over 250,000 Michigan members, Clean Water Action urges you to oppose Senate Bill 1052.

All Michigan citizens, not just riparian owners, have water rights that cannot be denied. It is the duty of the state to ensure those rights are not infringed upon and to hold and protect our waters in the public trust.

Part of the duty of the state to hold the water in trust for the public includes safeguarding the integrity of Michigan's aquatic ecosystems. Fish breed in coastal marshes and in other vegetation at the water's edge which also provides habitat to the myriad of organisms, like snails, that are essential to the food chain. Without limiting removal of this important water-dependant vegetation, we threaten the state's \$2 billion fishing industry and risk permanently ruining our invaluable water bodies.

Clean Water Action opposed a similar Coastal Wetlands Destruction bill back in 2003. The General Permit system was put in place to mitigate much of the damage that occurred after the passage of that legislation almost a decade ago. And, though Clean Water Action has been concerned about whether these aquatic ecosystems are adequately safeguarded through the General Permit for beach grooming activities, we felt the GP was a major improvement over PA 14 of 2003. The GP process has been made easier to navigate and permits are very rarely denied. The groups who agreed to the creation of the General Permit system should not be allowed to go back on those agreements now.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will retain authority over coastal wetlands but this law will confuse the public about whether an activity is regulated or not. Moreover, the federal agency permit process has much greater delays and higher pricetags attached. This is the last thing Michigan needs when it comes to making our environmental oversight more effective.

Instead of streamlining the process or making other changes to better educate the public around the General Permit program, SB 1052 attempts allow the complaints of a few landowners to usurp the water rights of all Michigan citizens. Not only do state officials like the members of this Committee have a duty to protect our waters now, there is a duty to ensure the health of our water for future generations.

Please oppose SB 1052 and retain the existing GP permit for these activities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan E. Harley".

Susan E. Harley, J.D.
Michigan Policy Director