

## **Land and Water Management Division (LWMD) Work Load Reduction Implementation Plan Briefing**

The LWMD faces considerable challenges in meeting its responsibilities to protect Michigan's sensitive natural resources. Beyond the difficulties inherent in the programs it administers, the LWMD does not have sufficient funding and staffing to fulfill its statutorily assigned responsibilities. Decreasing funding support coupled with increasing program responsibilities has created a structural imbalance that is distorting LWMD operations and that is having unrecognized consequences to the people and natural resources of Michigan.

The LWMD has experienced an erosion of funding, with a corresponding reduction in staffing levels.

Since 2002, general fund appropriations have decreased from \$7,700,000 to \$5,600,000, a reduction of nearly 28%.

Since 2005, LWMD has received \$8 million of supplemental funding, consisting of many one-time funding sources, which are now limited or no longer available.

Permit application revenue has decreased due to a drop in applications and an increase in the percentage of applications in lower fee categories.

The overall LWMD budget has decreased since 2002 from \$14.2 million to \$13.8 million. Because of increased costs, the real buying power of this allocation means the LWMD can now fund 112 staff, in comparison to the 135 funded in 2002. Thus, LWMD has lost 17% of its staff (23 positions) since 2002.

This structural imbalance is unlikely to be addressed through any significant increase in funding in the near term, and with LWMD's own internal reviews having nearly maximized efficiencies, the need for a more comprehensive and innovative approach was needed. LWMD management, with significant input from division staff, generated a list of actions to reduce staff effort with the least potential for public health, safety and resource impact. The list of actions became the basis for the LWMD Work Load Reduction Implementation Plan. The Department of Environmental Quality's Environmental Advisory Council supported this effort when it recommended that the LWMD take steps to more keenly focus its efforts on the greatest risks to Michigan's sensitive lands, resources, and ecological functions and processes, and curtail other services and operations accordingly.

The Plan was designed to realign LWMD work effort to ensure that the highest priority issues can be addressed with the staff resources available. Most of the actions identified in the attached plan summary are expected to be short term in nature (up to 18 months). The status of funding and staffing levels as well as the identified impacts of the actions being taken will be evaluated to determine what changes will need to be made at the end of fiscal year 2009.