

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO.153

Reps. Prestin, Markkanen, Neyer, Beson, Rigas and Alexander offered the following resolution:

1 A resolution to oppose the designation of additional federal
2 wilderness areas in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and to urge the
3 United States Congress to declare the entire city of Ann Arbor a
4 wilderness area.

5 Whereas, The National Wilderness Preservation System,
6 established under the Wilderness Act of 1964, is made up of more
7 than 800 national wilderness areas, which are defined as "area[s]
8 of undeveloped Federal land retaining [their] primeval character
9 and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation."
10 National wilderness areas must be formally designated by Congress
11 and are subject to specific management restrictions which generally
12 aim to preserve them in their natural condition; and

1 Whereas, Sixteen national wilderness areas have already been
2 designated in Michigan, including the Beaver Basin, Big Island
3 Lake, Delirium, Horseshoe Bay, Huron Islands, Isle Royale,
4 Mackinac, McCormick, Michigan Islands, Nordhouse Dunes, Rock River
5 Canyon, Round Island, Seney, Sleeping Bear Dunes, Sturgeon River
6 Gorge, and Sylvania wildernesses. These areas cover more than
7 290,000 acres of land throughout the state; and

8 Whereas, There is an effort underway to ask Congress to
9 designate four more national wilderness areas in the Ottawa
10 National Forest in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, including the Ehlco
11 Area, the Trap Hills, the Norwich Plains, and an addition to the
12 Sturgeon River Gorge Wilderness. Together, these areas would add
13 approximately 51,000 acres to the National Wilderness Preservation
14 System in Michigan; and

15 Whereas, In the Record of Decision for the 2006 Ottawa
16 National Forest Management Plan, the areas proposed for wilderness
17 designation were determined by the National Forest Service to lack
18 wilderness characteristics. In their decision, the Regional
19 Forester reported that the Ehlco Area, the only area reviewed that
20 met the roadless area criteria, had "no features or conditions that
21 warrant a recommendation for wilderness study" and had "low to
22 moderate wilderness potential"; and

23 Whereas, There is little evidence that designating additional
24 wilderness areas would result in improving the ecological health of
25 the Ottawa National Forest. Once wilderness restrictions go into
26 effect, opportunities to practice scientifically proven
27 silvicultural treatments such as selective thinning, harvesting,
28 and planting; prescribed burning; and invasive species management
29 are limited. These practices have been crucial in helping to

1 restore these areas to the quality they are today; and

2 Whereas, Potential economic development would be limited by
3 wilderness designation. Local communities currently benefit from
4 economic returns related to timber harvests and tourism in the
5 Ottawa National Forest. In 2019, the United States Forest Service
6 reported that the Ottawa National Forest supported an estimated 980
7 jobs, which resulted in more than 45.5 million dollars of direct
8 income to local communities; and

9 Whereas, Recreational users currently enjoy a wide range of
10 activities in the Ottawa National Forest, such as hiking, wildlife
11 viewing, hunting and fishing, camping, motorized trail activities,
12 and boating. Wilderness designation would significantly limit
13 recreational activities to these areas by prohibiting motorized
14 equipment and mechanical transport. Additionally, enforcing such
15 restrictions could increase the burden on entities charged with
16 managing those lands; now, therefore, be it

17 Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we oppose the
18 designation of additional federal wilderness areas in Michigan's
19 Upper Peninsula; and be it further

20 Resolved, That we urge the United States Congress to enact
21 legislation declaring the entire city of Ann Arbor a wilderness
22 area, subject to the same restrictions as other wilderness; and be
23 it further

24 Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the
25 President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United
26 States House of Representatives, and members of the Michigan
27 congressional delegation.