2026-27 ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM PLATFORM

The Michigan Association of Counties holds that a healthy environment is central to sustaining a sound economy and a positive quality of life in Michigan. Federal, state and local governments, businesses and all citizens must share the responsibility for maintaining and improving the environment. Legislative initiatives and administrative rule-making authority addressing environmental issues must include county input and representation. They must also consider balancing long-term needs with short-term impacts, costs, benefits, economic effects on local communities and possible unintended consequences. Sound, responsible and sustainable funding strategies must be identified to implement and ensure the success of policies and programs. We support full state funding or provisions that allow reasonable cost recovery for county departments that deal with health and environmental activities conducted on behalf of the state.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

MAC supports:

- Continued efforts by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) to set **clear** priorities with a studied, reasoned approach to regulatory policies and procedures, determined with the purposeful engagement of local political jurisdictions and their citizenry.
- County authority over implementing solid waste management objectives through the development of local solutions and the siting of solid waste facilities.
- Financial and technical support by the state for creating, implementing, and operating county Materials Management Plans as mandated by the state.
- Retaining local authority to convert capped and excess landfills to other uses.
- State policies that enable counties to have the resources necessary and adequate staff resources to plan and implement county solid waste management laws, rules and regulations, as mandated by the state.
- Revenue generated from increases in tipping fees going toward materials management and other local waste programs including, but not limited to, landfill diversion, recycling infrastructure and ongoing costs associated with landfills.
- Fees commensurate to offset costs associated with increase in tipping fees.
- Direct and consistent communication with leadership of relevant state agencies.

SEPTIC AND SEWAGE SOLUTIONS

MAC supports:

- State financial resources to address septic and sewage waste problems, including potable water quality, E. Coli, algal blooms and economic loss from impaired water quality.
- State partnership with counties for education of available resources for low-

income, senior citizens.

- Locally driven septic sewage initiatives which focus on collaboration among stakeholders and county public health departments focusing on regional solutions.
- Efforts to enhance information management systems and outreach activities to the public on health benefits and threats resulting from best and worst practices. The establishment of financial support mechanisms for homes that need to replace a well or septic system.
- Proper funding and adequate financing mechanisms for storm and sanitary sewer separation.
- A county's right to initiate a point-of-sale ordinance without district health objections.
- A county's right to initiate a risk-based inspection ordinance.
- Developing an electronic database or inventory of septic tanks in the state before enacting new policies for evaluations.
- Full funding and technical support for local entities to engage in data collection.
- Prioritizing high-risk septic tanks for evaluations, registration, and pumping including, but not limited to, tanks closest to surface water, tanks older than 30 years and tanks that were installed without proper registration.

RECYCLING

MAC supports:

- Comprehensive recycling initiatives which focus on integrating the participation of the residential, commercial and industrial sectors through regional and statewide initiatives.
- The continuation of county revenue generation from recycling via market development and state funding which sufficiently supports recycling initiatives.
- State legislative incentives to reduce waste via improved packaging designs, the ability to purchase "long-life" products and the creation of products with recycled materials.
    - Revisit this - The cost-effective and feasible expansion of non-carbonated bottle recycling.
- Changes to the distribution of escheat monies going through the Renew Michigan Fund to support county recycling at rates substantially higher than current levels.
- Statutory changes that allow a county to enact stricter ordinances than state law.
- State funding and policies to help counties achieve the proposed 45% recycling rate by 2050.

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE (HHW) PROGRAMS

MAC supports:

- Sustained funding for collections, collection facilities and HHW disposal.
- Regulations regarding hazardous waste collection, storage and disposal or recycling based upon environmentally and scientifically sound standards, thereby sustaining the highest degree of public health and safety.

HAZARDOUS WASTE MANAGEMENT

MAC supports:

- State policies and funding for counties to manage, respond to emergencies associated with and dispose of *all batteries*, solar panel equipment, and any other large scale hazardous equipment.
- Adoption of a policy to ensure that deep well injection (a way of disposing of hazardous waste) is proven environmentally safe before it is utilized and ensuring that the well does not leach into any surrounding waters and that waste derived from the injection is disposed of according to U.S. EPA standards.
- Fines and penalties for noncompliance with environmentally safe protocols when handling hazardous waste materials that threaten our water and environment.
- A statewide electric battery waste management program, including manufacturer responsibility for end-of-life management.
- Research into the environmental impacts of EMF (electromagnetic field) waste.

WATER RESOURCES

MAC supports:

- State laws and policies on pollution prevention strategies that reduce waste and neutralize the toxicity of hazardous waste.
- Adequate and sustainable state funds and grants to county health departments with watershed, beach and surface (water) monitoring programs.
- The reauthorization of the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program, funded through assessments on nitrate fertilizers and pesticides to provide technical assistance, cost-sharing funds and research.
- Michigan's collaboration with other Great Lakes states, the National Association of Counties and Canadian provinces to protect the Great Lakes and prevent the diversion and redistribution of Great Lakes waters outside their basins.
- Legislation that maintains consistent and geographically optimal conservation standards for water. Michigan's groundwater resources.
- Reasonable soil erosion control, sedimentation control and watershed management, provided that the state fully funds and sustains all mandated activities.
- The regulation of, testing for and remediation of problem chemicals, such as PFAS; counties should not bear the costs involved.
- The banning of all PFAS products by 2050.
- Funding provided by the state, or responsible polluters, to test private wells for PFAS chemicals which are not currently being tested under MPART (Michigan PFAS Action Response Team) testing guidelines.
- Legislation that would require polluters to pay for the cleanup of their pollution in aquifers to meet drinking water standards.
- A specific "navigable waters" definition, as stated in the 2015 Waters of the U.S. rule definitions, which does not include local streets, gutters and human-made ditches.

MAC opposes:

- Amending Part 31 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to allow EGLE to promulgate any additional rules after Dec. 31, 2006.

LOW-LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTE (LLRW)

MAC supports:

- Amending the federal 1980 Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act to:
  - Limit the number of LLRW sites to three nationwide
  - Exclude from the definition of LLRW those substances that remain hazardous for more than 100 years
  - Deregulate below regulatory concern (BRC) radioactive waste and provide for its disposal in municipal solid waste landfills or incinerators
- A policy that the siting criteria of PA 204 of 1987 should allow a county interested in locating an LLRW facility within its borders to seek a waiver of specific criteria.
- A policy that all surrounding jurisdictions to the facility/site and citizens be included in the process.
- A policy to require full compensation and environmental agreements be reached before the community is asked to make a firm commitment, plus a countywide referendum to authorize the signing of final agreements.

SCRAP TIRE MANAGEMENT

MAC supports:

- The utilization of Act 51 money and State General Fund dollars to expand rubberized asphalt use for roads and other public facilities as an alternative to scrapping tires.
- Legislation that addresses scrap tire disposal challenges that contribute to mosquito abatement and fire control efforts.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

MAC supports:

- K-16 curricula integration of how natural aquatic and land environments function through hands-on STEM (science, technology engineering, math) education and how humans can manage behavior and ecosystems to live sustainably and improve their communities for future generations.
- Funding Initiatives by MSU Extension, conservation districts, recycling centers and other stakeholders to develop resources to better inform communities on environmental topics.

AIR POLLUTION

MAC supports:

- Holding point-source polluters responsible for their practices.
- State laws, policies and federal regulatory authorities that subject all jurisdictions to federal corrective actions or penalties for non-locally generated air pollution.
- Research and exploration into programs and practices to support carbon sequestration.

LAND USE/PLANNING

MAC supports:

- Local governments possessing the resources necessary for sustainable growth management, with the caveat of recognizing private property rights.
- Land preservation resources that do not encourage urban sprawl or indiscriminate land usage that threatens the environment.
- Effective growth management initiatives and tools.
- The development of a more comprehensive statutory framework that enables counties to address problems associated with rural areas' residential and commercial development, the loss of agricultural and forest resources, the costs of infrastructure and the social conflicts at the intersection of residential and agricultural communities.
- State funding allocations for counties to use to promote county parks, green spaces and natural resources and the inherent benefits to public health.
- Repealing Public Act 233 of 2023 which limits a county's ability to consider land use when crafting ordinances for the zoning of renewable energy facilities.
- Local Land Use decision making.
- Land use planning that incorporates the necessary infrastructure for growth BEFORE buildout.
- Requiring land conservancies to pay PILT payments to county governments.

MAC opposes:

- State preemption of land use decisions.
- State preemption of local zoning.
- Foreign governments acquiring ownership of land across the State of Michigan.
- Foreign corporations acquiring land across the State of Michigan without county board approval.
- Statewide land division requirements.
- Conservancies acquiring land and taking it off the tax rolls.

ENERGY FACILITY SITINGRENEWABLE ENERGY

MAC supports:

- Financial and technical support provided by the state to the county for the development of sustainable, reliable and cost-efficient renewable energy resources, energy conservation programs and the removal of regulatory obstacles.
- County involvement and collaboration with other municipalities and landowners in the regulation, installation, expansion or abandonment of large-scale renewable energy sites.

INVASIVE SPECIES & PEST INFESTATION

MAC supports:

- The development of sustainable plans to identify, prevent, reduce and eliminate invasive species in Michigan so long as those plans do not endanger public safety.
- Collaborative action by the federal government and Great Lakes states to prevent further entry of invasive species (e.g., Asian carp) into the Great Lakes and inland lakes.

STATE LAND MANAGEMENT

MAC supports:

- The use of sound, reasonable and proper state land management policies by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the requirement that the DNR works closely with counties and other local government units on land management issues.
- Requiring the DNR to pay their fair share of special assessments (Drain and Lake Level Assessments).

MAC opposes:

- Any state-owned purchases, sales, land transfers or exchanges without the approval of the boards of commissioners of affected counties.

MINING AND SEVERED MINERAL RIGHTS

MAC supports:

- Efforts to develop legislation that will protect the mineral rights of surface or sub-surface (i.e., property) owner(s) from improper seizure, including mineral rights registration and activity notification.
- A policy that any proposed state changes to taxes for mining shall not result in any loss of local revenues or local authority.
- Legislation requiring oil and gas drillers to pay impact fees to counties, cities, villages, townships and property owners across the state.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

MAC supports:

- Full state funding or provision for reasonable cost recovery for county health department Environmental Health Division activities conducted on behalf of the state.
- Full state or federal funding for well monitoring and testing.
- State and federal funding for a coordinated state and local initiative to combat the harmful effects of PFAS and any other contaminants.
- Efforts by the state and federal governments to combat environmental injustice, thereby ensuring all Michigan residents are provided with the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and have equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live.

ENERGY RELIABILITY AND SAFETY

MAC supports:

- A robust analysis of possible methods to safely transport and provide necessary energy sources.
- Prioritizing electrical grid build-out on public land over private lands.
- State and federal investments to strengthen and protect Michigan's electrical grid.

STORM WATER, HIGH WATER, DRAINS, DAMS AND EROSION

MAC supports:

- Coordination of resources with pertinent state and federal departments such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. EPA, EGLE, the National Weather Service, Michigan State Police and others.

- Funding from the state to offset losses to public infrastructure.
- EGLE quickly providing private property owners with permits to safely and properly protect their property from damage due to shoreline erosion.
- A dedicated state-level funding source for dam repairs and removals, available to all counties at a sufficient level to cover the costs of bringing the dams into safe status.
- A dedicated funding source to offset the cost to property owners and locals for storm water management.
- Drain commissioners presenting to the County BOC the scope of a petitioned drain project before holding a public hearing on the scope of a petitioned drain project.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION
MAC supports:

- The state of Michigan providing continued leadership and increased funding in efforts to preserve agricultural land permanently.
- Making the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) certification a component of farmland preservation.
- The DNR working with agricultural producers to promote the utilization of state-owned land for agricultural production, either through leasing of the land or sale of the land to producers.
- State funding for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).
- The current definition of the Waters of the United States and opposes the expansion of the definition to include non-continuous flow waters, detention and retention basins and man-made ditches.

PURCHASE DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS PROGRAM
MAC supports:

- The utilization of all farmland preservation tools or available resources and the exploration of new options for preservation methods.
- Appropriate and sufficient funding from the state to support this program.

CONSERVATION
MAC supports:

- The Legislature acting to restore historical funding to local conservation districts and Michigan State University Extension to assist in preserving agricultural lands and natural resources.
- Annual increases in base level funding for conservation districts.
- Funding for geological and ground water mapping and monitoring studies to ensure adequate data on water levels, water flow and contaminants.

CONCENTRATED ANIMAL FEEDING OPERATIONS (CAFOs)
MAC supports:

- The consistent enforcement of current regulations and permit requirements for CAFOs. All CAFOs should be working toward MAEAP certification.

COOPERATIVE FARMING AND AGRIBUSINESS
MAC supports:

- Legislation that would provide funding and/or assistance for the development and expansion of co-op farms and farm-to-table enterprises.
- State tools and investment to encourage food processors to come to, and stay in, Michigan.
- Regulatory changes that allow agricultural producers to showcase their products without undue restrictions.
- Branding of Michigan agricultural products by region.
- Urban community gardens.

TIMBER MANAGEMENT

MAC supports:

- State and federal timber management standards that promote sustainability, high timber quality and reforestation.
- The Qualified Forestry Program (QFP) and the Forestry Assistance Programs (FAP), which provide timber management assistance and promote active management of forests and woodlands for private landowners.
- An increase in payments to road agencies by the forestry industry for the wear and tear on county roads that is tied to inflation.

TOURISM

MAC supports:

- Legislation that provides additional revenue options for counties to offset the public cost of tourism.
- Legislation ensuring counties and local units of government can regulate short term rentals.
- Changes to hotel/motel taxes and other bed taxes to share the revenue with counties to support the public cost of tourism.
- Equitable treatment of counties across the state to collect revenue for tourism and economic development.
- Maintaining or increasing the current level of funding for the Pure Michigan marketing and economic development campaign.
- Providing adequate or additional funding to ensure the further growth of tourism across the state of Michigan and the infrastructure needed to support further growth.
- The proliferation of hiking, walking, biking, ORV, snowmobile, and blue trails throughout Michigan.
- New, sustainable and sufficient funding by the State for development, repair and maintenance of motorized and non-motorized trails, for example, a portion of the state park pass could be allocated for this purpose.
- Legislative changes requiring a county government seat on the convention and visitor bureau board as a full voting member.
- Legislation requiring annual audited reports of convention and visitor bureaus to encourage accountability to the public.
- Legislation expanding the use of off-road vehicles (ORVs) on state and federal forest roads.
- Promotion of the connection of existing ORV trails.

HUNTING AND WILD GAME MANAGEMENT

MAC supports:

- Expanded game hunting seasons and the expansion of wild game hunting and trapping to better manage wildlife and encourage tourism in Michigan.
- Expanding the availability of and lowering the cost of antler-less deer permits.
- Requiring the Department of Natural Resources to expand the promotion of hunting in Michigan.
- Requiring the Department of Natural Resources to consult counties when considering wildlife management and outdoor recreation changes.
- Funding for maintenance of Outdoor Recreation Activities established by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
- The establishment of an Upper Peninsula Natural Resources Commission.

COUNTY FAIRS

MAC supports:

- Maintenance and funding for all state and local county fairs.