

## **Natural Resources Committee Hearing on Water Extraction**

### **HB 5638 TESTIMONY**

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding HB 5638, which would make large quantity water removal easier and less transparent for the farmers of Southwest Michigan. My name is Dennis Eade. I serve as executive director for the Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association representing sport fishermen all around the state and a large fishing contingent in SW Michigan, with chapters in St. Joseph, South Haven and Kalamazoo, MI.

Michigan ranks second only to Florida as the most visited State for out-of-state anglers. 349,000 anglers came to Michigan last year because of our salmon and Steelhead trout fishing opportunities. They spend money to stay in our hotels in St. Joseph, MI. and other harbor towns, eat at our restaurants, purchase gear in our tackle shops and charter with our captains and river guides in order to enjoy the best fresh water sport fishing in the world. The success of these fishing experiences depend on natural reproduction of salmonies in our rivers and streams. Cold water trout resources are dependent on rapid moving water from streams and tributaries and when excessive water withdrawals happen, especially during summer dry spells, we lose the young trout fry we depend on to maintain the fishery. Some years ago in a stream that winds through Berrien, St. Joe and Cass counties, an excessive water withdrawal occurrence caused the demise of hundreds of brown trout, leaving just ten fish to replenish the entire system. We have too much at risk to allow the oversight of the DEQ to be restricted.

These farm operators in SW Michigan are not your typical family farmers like some of your colleagues or the representatives who have co-sponsored HB 5638. These are huge operations owned by corporations that control seed corn distribution all over the world. To allow them to gain approval for drilling new wells and forcing the department to come back two years later to rule on the environmental impact, makes no sense. Changing the basis for granting a withdrawal raises a lot of concerns and puts our compact at risk. Our association strongly recommends that getting withdrawals right is paramount to preserving our water resources, and that should involve the "Water Use Advisory Council" to be actively engaged in the approval process, even if it means putting time limits for rulings in statue.

Finally, providing exemption from FOIA requirements only masks the potential damage that can result from large-scale water removals. FOIA exemption should not be part of this legislation.

Thank you Mr. Chairmen and members of the committee.

**Dennis H. Eade, Executive Director**  
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