

At a regular meeting of the Chippewa County Board of Commissioners, Chippewa County, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, held at the Chippewa County Building, 325 Court Street, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783 on April 11, 2024 at 4:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Jim Martin, Bob Savoie, Scott Shackleton, Damon Lieurance and Jim Traynor

ABSENT: None

The following resolution was offered by Commissioner Savoie, supported by Commissioner Shackleton;

RESOLUTION 2024-07

RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO THE FY 2025 GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDED BUDGET FOR THE REDUCTION OF OPERATIONAL FUNDING TO THE MICHIGAN CONSERVATION DISTRICTS AND THE ELIMINATION OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE MICHIGAN AGRICULTURE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSURANCE PROGRAM (MAEAP)

WHEREAS, on February 7, 2024, Governor Whitmer released her Executive Budget Recommendation for fiscal year 2025 which included under the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) recommended budget a \$1,000,000.00 cut to Michigan Conservation District's operating budget.

WHEREAS, the fiscal year 2025 budget recommendation for MDARD also recommended the termination of local Conservation District Technicians who administer the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program and replace them with 24 State employees.

WHEREAS, this recommendation undermines the local conservation delivery system led by local Conservation Districts covering all 83 Michigan counties using the voluntary, non-regulatory, educational approach used all across the country to address natural resources concerns at the local level.

WHEREAS, Michigan passed Public Act 297 of 1937 to establish Conservation District's as local units of State Government to work with landowners in every county to address natural resource concerns driven by a five member publicly elected Board of Directors. These Boards establish conservation priorities based on their local needs and voluntarily work with landowners to address critical natural resource concerns, the only organization that can do this on private land with the trust of the landowner.

WHEREAS, Michigan Conservation Districts have been critically underfunded for decades. This has left many Conservation Districts without staff to implement programs or provide assistance. Because of this, Michigan Conservation Districts experience high employee turnover which undermines the success of programs and the ability to administer assistance to the public.

WHEREAS, Michigan cannot effectively allocate federal funds from the Inflation Reduction Act and Title II of the Farm Bill due to the lack of funding provided by the State of Michigan. This leaves critical federal dollars on the table that is reallocated to other States that can deliver Farm Bill dollars more effectively.

