

Lakes diversion called 'hype'

By Penny Wright
special writer

Donald Smith drew to the capacity audience: "To my knowledge, nobody in Texas is looking at the Great Lakes. I am at a loss to understand why there is all this hullabaloo."

The Texas geologist tried to quell the hullabaloo last week while speaking at a symposium on Great Lakes water diversion in Ann Arbor and found support from at least one other panellist.

The symposium was sponsored by the University of Michigan Environmental Law Society. Other panellists included: Joseph Sax, U-M law professor; Pamela Willey, council of Great Lakes Governors; David Miller, Great Lakes United; and Mark Van Putten, National Wildlife Federation.

"We can't afford your water — no way," said the scientist from the Texas Department of Water Resources. "I doubt that anybody would care to move the water here, now or at a time in the future. There are other sources of water a lot closer."

SAX, THE U-M Law School's envi-

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Texas geologist

ronmental expert, discounted the recent threats of western water diversions as media hype. Sax called the "agreements to cooperate" the real significance of the charter.

Except for two Monroe residents who favored selling excess Great Lakes water, the audience was concerned about a threat that has enraged the states and provinces surrounding the Great Lakes Basin. At issue is keeping the waters of the basin (area drained by the Great Lakes and their tributaries) out of the thirsty clutches of sun-belt and western states.

Scientists have determined that aquifers (groundwater reservoirs) beneath the Great Plains states are being depleted at alarming rates. Michigan and other Great Lakes governments fear a large-scale water grab as the aquifers decline. In the minds of many, Texas is already in the "bandit" category.

PANELLIST David Miller told the audience that there is no present threat of diverting the Great Lakes. "While I don't think a Texan will be dipping his hat into Great Lakes water right away, there is a need to think ahead," the

Great Lakes United spokesman said. Miller and other panellists emphasized the importance of the Great Lakes Charter for protection of the Basin's water system.

The charter was signed Feb. 11 by eight Great Lakes states (Michigan, New York, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Indiana and Pennsylvania) and two Canadian provinces (Ontario and Quebec).

The agreement bans diversions from the Great Lakes if the ecosystem is jeopardized. The pact also provides a process for regional cooperation over issues of diversion proposals, water management and environmental and economic data collection.

"THE STATES and provinces have agreed to consult each other about uses of the Lakes," Sax said. The professor had been a member of the task force that developed the charter provisions.

"All the states have interests that are at odds with each other," Sax said. Traditionally, differences have been settled by long court battles involving the Supreme Court. "For Illinois to say 'we will consult with you' — that is a concession," Sax said.

Sax emphasized that the charter's ban on diverting Great Lakes water is not legally binding. Among other things, diversion would take a compact approved by the U.S. Congress and a change in the U.S. Constitution to legally stop exportation of the basin's waters.

"The Great Lakes doesn't belong to anybody," said Sax. "The charter puts us in the position to protect and maintain the waters in the Great Lakes Basin. It is doing the most the states can do to protect their own interests and still have a reasonable chance of being upheld as lawful."

Foundation honors Reickel

R. Eric Reickel, former manager of Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission, has been honored by Oakland Parks Foundation.

Now manager of Wayne County Parks and Recreation, Reickel was instrumental in creating the non-profit organization set up to preserve and enhance parks and recreation in Oakland County.

Seven new trustees were also installed during Oakland Parks Foundation's third annual dinner meeting May 1 in Addison Oaks Conference Center near Oxford. About 75 people attended the event.

NEW TRUSTEES include Birmingham residents Christopher Nern, an attorney with Detroit Edison Co.; John Thurber, partner in Miller, Canfield, Padlock and Stone law firm; and Susan Zabrickie, manager of Michigan Bell's Distribution Services.

Also installed by Oakland County

Probate Judge John J. O'Brien were Bloomfield Hills residents A. David Baumgart, partner in the law firm of May, Gowing, Mosher and Simpson; and Rita Lindholm, North American treasurer of D'Arcy, MacManus, Manus and Associates.

Other new trustees are Jack Cook of Ortonville, district manager for Michigan Bell; and Loren McEwen of West Bloomfield, public relations consultant with Henry Ford Hospital, Maple Grove.

ELECTED OFFICERS at the meeting were George Goggsian of Oakland Township, president for a third term; Jack Cook of Ortonville, vice president; Donna Bullard of Clarkston, secretary; and Don Van Loo of Bloomfield Hills, treasurer for a third term.

Also recognized at the annual meeting were retiring board members Godfrey Hopper, West Bloomfield; Maria Runk, Farmington Hills; Marjorie Walker, Birmingham; Ruthann Walsh,

Franklin; and Phillip (Marty) Yates, Troy.

Other foundation trustees are Birmingham residents Barbara (Bunny) Goldman, John Jickling and William Slocum; Bloomfield Hills residents Gertrude (Kitty) Davenport and Patrick T. Frey; Clarkston residents Dan Travis and Lewis Wint; Claude Brittingham, Rochester; and Jane Smith, Waterford.

DURING The past year, Oakland Parks Foundation has sponsored a number of events including a Winter Family Fun Day that drew 1,200 to Addison Oaks County Park. A similar summer event is planned for June 2 in Waterford Oaks County Park.

A cabaret evening with entertainer Bob Posch raised funds for an all-volunteer nature trail for the handicapped in Independence Oaks County Park.

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