

Back environmental bonds — DNR chiefs

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Michigan's top two natural resources experts told a regional environmental group that a proposed state bond issue is a good deal — even if it does have economic development money attached.

"We're never gonna compete with prisons and higher education (in popularity)," said Gordon E. Guyer, outgoing director of the state Department of Natural Resources.

"It will be a tremendous enhancement to what everyone in this room believes," Guyer told 150 people attending the annual meeting of the East Michigan Environmental Action Council (EMEAC) Tuesday night at Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills.

THE LEGISLATURE is drafting a ballot proposal for an environmental bond issue of \$800-900 million asked by Gov. James Blanchard. But a battle has erupted over Blanchard's later request to use a quarter of the money for economic development.

"It would provide opportunities to enhance sewage systems and the (superconducting) super collider," a federal atomic laboratory for which Michigan is one of three top bidders.

David Hales, the former University of Michigan natural resources professor who will succeed Guyer this month, asked EMEAC to concentrate on the environmental rather than economic side of the bond issue.

"If you want to give us the ability to control the future, to attract the kind of industry we want, to build the infrastructure we need, to keep industry in industrialized areas rather than converting agricultural lands, forest lands, giving us problems with wetlands permits, then look at the other parts of that bill," Hales said.

The "other parts," Guyer said, will provide for:

- Solid waste initiatives at the local level.
- \$300 million for cleanup of toxic waste sites — "We're not going to get it from the feds."
- \$87 million to enhance state parks — roofing buildings, putting in sewer systems. "The 24 million visitors who came to our parks last year deserve something better."

GUYER'S EXIT is accompanied by a second battle over his proposal to streamline DNR and its affiliated commissions.



Gordon Guyer



David Hales

Guyer proposes two components under the Natural Resources Commission — one for traditional hunting-fishing issues, the other for environmental issues.

He would abolish the Water Resources Commission, Air Pollution Control Commission, Toxic Substance Control Commission, Resources Recovery Commission and Michigan Environmental Review Board.

"Too many satellite groups," Guyer told EMEAC. "It becomes almost unmanageable."

A professor in Michigan State University's agriculture college, Guyer was a member of the Natural Resources Commission until 1988 when director Ron Skoog was forced out because of his inability to manage the sprawling agency. Guyer agreed to take the job for only two years.

An EMEAC member objected to wiping out the five commissions because "this removes the number of citizens who can give input, offer services and be critical in a creative sense."

"It was never my intention to inhibit public input," Guyer replied. He added that streamlining will "prevent so much end-running by the business community."

THE REORGANIZATION also is opposed by one of DNR's most potent constituent groups — the Michigan

United Conservation Clubs.

MUCC charges that streamlining would put too much power in the hands of the Natural Resources Commission, which it says bowed to political pressure from Gov. Blanchard in hiring Hales as the new director.

Hales, 43, has had a brief stint as head of the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Commission. With two degrees in political science, Hales was an executive assistant in Oklahoma's state park system and a deputy assistant secretary in one division of President Carter's Interior Department. In 1976 Hales was Carter's Midwest regional campaign director.

Scoffs Thomas Washington, MUCC's executive director. "He's been a considerable butterfly for a man 43 years old. I don't know of any particular achievements."

But Guyer and Hales are getting along like two old pals despite the 10-year age difference and MSU-UM backgrounds. They attend budget hearings and public gatherings like EMEAC's together.

Hales will face a 10 percent cut in DNR's operating budget, down to about \$225 million, next year. In an interview, he said he will have to cut "grants" programs rather than staff because DNR's enforcement staff already is overworked.



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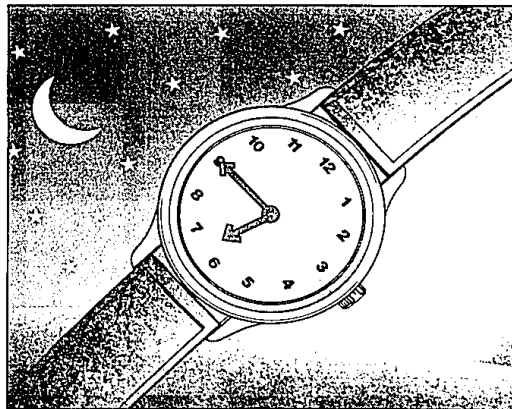
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