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## **Michigan Forest Products Council Announces Support for Senate Bill 78**

*Legislation proposed by Senator Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba) would offer increased benefits for Michigan citizens and present the opportunity for management of public lands.*

**LANSING, Mich.**—The Michigan Senate Natural Resources, Environment and Great Lakes Committee met this morning at 9:00EST to discuss SB78, known as the “Living Legacies bill.” The Michigan Forest Products Council supports the Committee’s efforts to return policy making on the preservation of public lands to the legislature.

Under current law, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) holds the authority on designation of Biodiversity Stewardship Areas (BSAs). SB78, sponsored by Senator Tom Casperson (R- Escanaba), gives power to the legislature protect biodiversity areas, rather than the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

This bill prohibits the appropriation of state timberland for the exclusive management of biodiversity.

“Michigan actively manages less than half of the publicly available forests in the state,” said Scott Robbins, MFPC Director of SFI and Public Affairs, “As a result forest health is on the decline and we applaud Senator Casperson’s legislation that attempts to have the legislature engaged in better policy and outcomes.”

The negative impacts of untended forests include tree mortality, disease, fire, uncontrolled invasive species and loss of timber types and habitat. The bill will also eliminate language that states most losses of biological diversity are the result of human activity, as many losses of biodiversity can result from natural causes.

MFPC Board member, John Lamy, indicated the economic impact of these losses in his testimony to the committee:

*“According to the Forest Service’s, Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA), 2011, we are seeing timber mortality rates on State owned land of 91% of removals. In other words for every cord of wood harvested and utilized we have almost another cord dying and lost to the economy. It would seem we should be working toward increasing management options, not reducing them.*

*We aren’t suggesting that capturing all mortality is possible, or good for that matter, the ratio does appear to be out of reasonable order. Stepping back and looking at all the facts and pieces involved, it is our opinion that SB 78 is the best way to achieve a reasonable end result and we, again, fully support.”*

Additional testimony from private foresters pointed out to the committee that opening up opportunity for private forestry also promotes entrepreneurship and small business—two focal points of Governor Snyder’s vision for Michigan.

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