

**Testimony of Dennis L. Schornack, Executive Director
Michigan Recreation and Park Association
to the
Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee
Regarding: SBs 388 and 389
April 22, 2009**

The Michigan Recreation and Park Association testified on the State Park Passport proposal at the joint hearing on April 1, 2009. Subsequently, our public policy committee and board of directors have discussed the proposal in detail. As a result of those discussions, I wish to raise one item of concern for the record.

State and local parks are complementary public assets, frequently contiguous or even interconnected by trails - what I like to think of as "linear parks." Professionals in both systems consider themselves colleagues who advocate for common causes like outdoor recreation and resource conservation.

The concern I wish to raise for the record is this: Like state parks, a few county parks (e.g., Oakland and Ottawa) charge entry fees and rely upon fee revenues to help fund operations and maintenance. These county parks are also in close proximity to state parks. If the Passport proposal passes and entry fees to nearby state parks are eliminated, these county park leaders are concerned that day users will shift their preference to state parks to avoid daily entry fees, and thereby reduce county park revenues.

Local park and recreation professionals would rather collaborate with their state park colleagues than compete for scarce resources. So, we wish to work with you to find a way to hold the few county parks that charge entry fees harmless from the unintended consequences that may arise from the Passport bills.

We are encouraged that the substitute for SB 388 strengthens enforcement to reduce the incidence of state park use by people who do not pay the Recreation Passport Fee. This provision helps to allay the "competition" concern I have noted, but the details of enforcement remain devilish.

On a closing note, we wish to commend the committee for substitute language expressing the intent that state and local park planners should work together to integrate Michigan's park system, and to save money through such actions as joint purchasing of commonly used goods.

Thank you, I would be happy to take any questions.