



A Home-grown Stimulus of Our Own

Despite the gloom and doom surrounding the state budget, Michigan lawmakers can act to create hundreds of jobs starting this spring by quickly passing supplemental appropriations to fund projects recommended last December by the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

The “silver lining” in the dark cloud of last year’s high energy prices is that oil and gas royalties to the Trust Fund hit a record high – nearly \$50 million. These revenues are restricted for the acquisition and development of recreational lands and facilities for public use.

In December, the Trust Fund board recommended 81 “shovel-ready” projects – 18 at the state level, and 63 at the local level – for funding. All that remains to put people to work in the coming construction season is the prompt passage of an appropriation bill.

Because the recommended projects have been through an extensive and objective scoring process, legislators have historically left the list of local projects alone. Attempts to mess with the list risk exposure for being transparently political, and attaching unrelated riders can only lead to delays that bite into Michigan’s short construction season.

The Michigan Recreation and Park Association and its 2,000 professional members support the passage of a clean Trust Fund supplemental appropriation as soon as possible and no later than the end of March. This fully vetted and fully funded initiative is a home-grown stimulus package that can put Michigan citizens to work this spring building park and recreation facilities in communities across the state.

Dennis Schornack is the Executive Director of the Michigan Recreation and Park Association whose members create community through people, parks, and programs.