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## **Michigan Senate Approves Legislation to Enhance State Forest Management, Recreation and Tourism**

*Senate passes Senate Bill 78 to boost forest health and access*

**LANSING, Mich.**—The Michigan Forest Products Council applauds bill sponsor, Senator Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba), and the Michigan Senate for passing SB 78 9 (26-11).

Senate Bill 78 contains legislation that will enhance management of Michigan’s State Forest System by amending the DNR “Living Legacies” program to require legislative approval of designated Biodiversity Stewardship Areas (BSAs).

“We’ve followed the BSA Program for many years, and frankly it has not been transparent,” said Scott Robbins MFPC Certification and Forest Policy Director, “Preservation intended in the BSA/Living Legacies program is primarily aimed at eliminating human activities, such as recreation, harvesting, oil and mineral development rather than land use.”

The MFPC has recently expressed its support for the bill, which is a first step in safeguarding against set-asides that may compromise responsible forest management and promotion of forest diversity on protected sites.

Mike Vasievich, former research scientist for the USDA Forest Service, testified last week before the Senate committee on Natural Resources, Environments and the Great Lakes in favor of the bill.

“Protected areas are not in short supply in Michigan. In an analysis compiled [by Tessa Systems] in 2012, we found already over one-million acres of land were under some significant degree of protection—these includes state, local, and private lands,” Vasievich stated, “In fact, the four million acres of state forest and three million acres of federal forests are already protected from the greatest threat to our forestlands—commercial development.”

MFPC remains committed to responding to environmental, economic, societal issues on behalf of its statewide members. MFPC works to promote, protect and sustain a globally competitive forest products industry.

MFPC supports the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). SFI is responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving a sustainable forestry certification program that is internationally recognized and is the largest single forest standard in the world.

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