



For Immediate Release

March 18, 2008

Contact: Dr. Bryan Burroughs, Executive Director, Michigan Council

Trout Unlimited (MCTU) (616)-460-0477

Patrick Kochanny, Chairman, (MCTU) (231)-775-9717

**Senate Water Withdrawal Legislation Not the Best for
Coldwater Resources in Michigan**

Lansing, MI---Proposed state legislation that would regulate and monitor ground water withdrawals in Michigan would be detrimental to the state's coldwater resources.

Both the Michigan Senate and House have introduced legislation to regulate future large-volume water withdrawals within the state. This legislation is required to augment the Great Lakes Compact which will regulate large diversions from the Great Lakes. Both Chambers propose using a water withdrawal assessment tool, a package of scientific models, to predict the impact of future large withdrawals on aquatic natural resources. Fish abundance is being used as a surrogate for all aquatic health, and one important remaining

difference between Senate and House bills is how much damage to fisheries will be allowed.

Senate Bill 860 would allow future commercial ventures to reduce the number of trout, salmon and steelhead in coldwater streams by withdrawing large quantities of water. This bill would allow for an average of 25% of summer low water volume to be removed from rivers and streams throughout the state. Further, it would allow all new large volume water withdrawals less than 2 million gallons per day to be approved without a permit or a chance for public input. Trout Unlimited does not support allowing damage to coldwater fisheries as is currently proposed in Senate bill 860.

“Trout Unlimited believes that SB 860 will set a dangerous precedent and a slippery slope for the future. Our legislature is obligated to send a clear message that our valuable public resources, Michigan’s unique assets, should not suffer degradation to benefit future private commercial interests,” said Dr. Bryan Burroughs, Executive Director of the Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited.

The competing House bills (HB 5065 – 5073) differ from the Senate by proposing to allow new large volume water withdrawals only up to a point where they are predicted to have no damage to coldwater fisheries (still allowing for 14-22 % of summer low flows to be withdrawn depending on stream size). They also allow for more public input opportunities, and explicitly recognize the public trust responsibility of the state in managing its waters for all of its citizens, present and future. “The House bills are still not everything we’d hope for, but they are certainly more reflective of a true balance between environmental protection and commercial development than what the Senate has currently proposed.”

Trout Unlimited supports the current language in the House bills over those in the current Senate bill, and encourages conservation-minded citizens to contact their legislators about this issue.

Recent studies have estimated that fishing in Michigan contributes \$7 billion a year to our economy and supports more than 46,000 jobs. In a time when Michigan should be diversifying its economy and developing more tourism-based jobs, the Senate version of this legislation threatens to impact its existing viability in order to pander to big business interests.

Coldwater resources are vital to northern Michigan communities and provide a great deal to the local economy through property taxes, recreational activities, and tourism expenditures, including licensed fishing guides, canoe liveries, shops, gas stations, restaurants and lodging.

“Past legislation has recognized, grand-fathered, and protected current ‘water users’ because of their economic investment, but where is the protection and support for the current water users, also with economic investments, that benefit from thriving fish populations and using water in its place?” asked Burroughs.

“We (Trout Unlimited) had proposed a less than one percent reduction in thriving fish abundance which the Senate initially agreed to as part of a larger bipartisan compromise effort, but has recently backed-off from under pressure from thirsty commercial interests.” stated Pat Kochanny, Chair of the Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited.

The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited is a non-partisan grassroots organization, of over 7,000 members in Michigan, and is a part of the national organization, Trout Unlimited, which has 150,000 members and was founded 48 years ago in Grayling, Michigan on the banks of Michigan’s Au Sable River. The

mission of the Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited, like its parent organization, is to “conserve, protect, and restore Michigan’s coldwater fisheries and their watersheds.”

“With our mission statement, it should come as no surprise that we do not support degradation of our precious natural resources and determine that the current version of SB 860 is not what is best for Michigan’s coldwater natural resources or Michigan’s citizens.” stated Burroughs.

(SB860 & HB5065 - 5073)