

I am announcing some major organizational changes at today's Natural Resources Commission meeting, and I want to share the details with all of you.

We have to do everything we can to sustainably manage and protect Michigan's natural resources, while capitalizing on the economic opportunities they offer. In recent years, it has become clear that our department has a central and growing role in Michigan's natural resource-based economy and in the promotion of outdoor recreation opportunities.

The Forest Management Division (FMD) staff has carried a large portion of these responsibilities across a wide range of timber, oil, gas, mineral, land, fire management and recreation program activities. Because I believe it's better for each of our divisions to operate with a more singular focus, I am splitting FMD into more function-specific units.

For that reason, I am establishing the Forest Resources Division, with the responsibility of working closely with the new Timber Advisory Council. This division chief will also serve as the state forester, initially reporting directly to me. This new division will manage state forests and be a major partner in Michigan's vital timber industry. The Forest Management Division will no longer exist.

I am also establishing the Office of Land Administration, as part of the DNR's Administration Bureau. This office will include the oil, gas and mineral responsibilities currently housed in FMD, along with the existing Real Estate section currently within the Finance and Operations Division. In addition, all department issues of trespass, easements and use permits will be consolidated into the Real Estate section's area of responsibility.

I am transferring the personnel and functions of FMD's Recreation and Trails section into the Parks and Recreation Division. Right now, we have two different DNR divisions that promote and manage camping and trail use. Uniting our camping and trail management and promotion responsibilities within a single division will help us realize greater efficiency, improve outreach and greatly boost our ability to establish Michigan as "the Trail State."

These are big changes, but I believe these are necessary, right steps in order for the DNR to be successful in meeting its priorities and performing its mission.

All changes become effective January 8, 2012. I look forward to working with you as we implement these changes in the weeks and months ahead.

Thank you for your hard work on behalf of Michigan resources, citizens and visitors.

Rodney Stokes

Director