



SIERRA CLUB

MICHIGAN CHAPTER

Comments on [SB 714]

March 1st, 2020

To: Chairman Gary Howell and Members of the Committee

RE: Senate Bill 714 - Coastal Zone Hardening Bill

On behalf of our 150,000 members and supporters in Michigan, the Sierra Club expresses our opposition to Senate Bill 714.

As written this bill allows shoreline property owners to bypass the state permitting process that fosters ecologically friendly and hydrologically sound shoreline stabilization construction practices. Hardening the shoreline at one property will impact adjacent properties and structures, and increases erosion over the long term.

We must maintain the integrity of the permitting process. The permitting process helps prevent damage to neighboring properties and disruption to Michigan's coastal dunes, shorelines, and bluffs. The department is already understaffed and under-resourced that the ability for enforcement and monitoring is a great concern. The department does not have the latitude under this bill to guarantee that structures are properly constructed. Temporary erosion control structures, if not constructed properly, will lead to even greater long-term destruction and erosion to our shoreline. Allowing for 78 weeks is unacceptable and will exacerbate the problem. We must be careful and do our due diligence to ensure that we are not creating unintended consequences nor denying public access to our beaches.

EGLE has already been speeding up the permitting process and has been turning permits around in four to seven days. The problem doesn't lie with EGLE. The waiting period many are facing is due to the high demand currently placed on contractors and engineers. If this bill does pass, the issue at hand is still not being addressed. Contractors and engineers are going to continue to be backlogged and people will still be left waiting to construct.

Extreme weather events are not going away and the sheer force of our Great Lakes waves are not either. We need a long-term resilience plan to ensure we are fully prepared to address this ongoing issue while safeguarding our pristine shorelines and infrastructure from degradation and pollution. While we appreciate the intention of Senate Bill 714, unfortunately, it is a short-term solution to a long term problem that will lead to more harm than the good it hoped to achieve.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 714. Votes pertaining to this bill will be included in the Sierra Club's legislative scorecard.

Sincerely,

Tim Minotas
Deputy Legislative Director
Sierra Club Michigan Chapter