



HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

STATE OF MICHIGAN

Appropriations Requests for Legislatively Directed Spending Items

1. The sponsoring representative's first name:
Tom
2. The sponsoring representative's last name:
Kunse
3. The cosponsoring representatives' names. All cosponsors must be listed. If none, please type 'n/a.' A signed letter from the sponsor approving the co-sponsorship and a signed letter from the member wishing to co-sponsor are required. Attach letters at question #9 below.
n/a
4. Name of the entity that the spending item is intended for:
Muskegon River Watershed Assembly (an incorporated Michigan non-profit organization)
5. Physical address of the entity that the spending item is intended for:
c/o Ferris State University 1009 Campus Drive JOH 200 Big Rapids, MI 49307-2280
6. If there is not a specific recipient, the intended location of the project or activity:
Buckhorn Dam project site located at: 22200 Northland Dr Paris, MI 49338
7. Name of the representative and the district number where the legislatively directed spending item is located:
Tom Kunse D-100
8. Purpose of the legislatively directed spending item. Please include how it provides a public benefit and why it is an appropriate use of taxpayer funding. Please also demonstrate that the item does not violate Article IV, S 30 of the Michigan Constitution. The Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park currently crossed Buckhorn Creek on a century-old impoundment dam that is beginning to fail. Removal of this impoundment dam and replacement with a modern bridge of adequate specifications will accomplish the following:
 - Provide emergency access to maintain and improve safety for the White Pine Trail and nearby Paris Park campground

- Infrastructure maintenance (100+ year-old dam)
- Improve year-round recreational enjoyment for pedestrians, cyclists, and snowmobilers
- Tourism and related revenue – White Pine Trail and Paris Park as a destination
- Fish passage and refuge in Buckhorn Creek, a high-value, cold-water stream that supports wild trout reproduction
- Conservation and restoration of natural stream habitat

9. Attach documents here if needed:

Attachments added to the end of this file.

10. The amount of state funding requested for the legislatively directed spending item.

250000

11. Has the legislatively directed spending item previously received any of the following types of funding? Check all that apply.

["Federal","State","Local"]

12. Please select one of the following groups that describes the entity requesting the legislatively directed spending item:

Non-profit organization

13. For a non-profit organization, has the organization been operating within Michigan for the preceding 36 months?

Yes

14. For a non-profit organization, has the entity had a physical office within Michigan for the preceding 12 months?

Yes

15. For a non-profit organization, does the organization have a board of directors?

Yes

16. For a non-profit organization, list all the active members on the organization's board of directors and any other officers. If this question is not applicable, please type 'n/a.'

Please see attached.

17. "I certify that neither the sponsoring representative nor the sponsoring representative's staff or immediate family has a direct or indirect pecuniary interest in the legislatively directed spending item."

Yes, this is correct

18. Anticipated start and end dates for the legislatively directed spending item:

April 1, 2026 – September 30, 2026

19. "I hereby certify that all information provided in this request is true and accurate."

Yes

Buckhorn Creek / White Pine State Park Trail

Dam Removal & Bridge Replacement

Paris, Michigan – Green Township, Mecosta County

Appropriations Request: \$250,000 towards Bridge Replacement

In 2018, the Director of the Mecosta County Parks Commission urgently contacted the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly (MRWA) when the deck on the 100-year-old, failing Buckhorn Creek Dam adjacent to the popular White Pine Trail collapsed. He was aware that MRWA and the Michigan DNR had interest in removing the dam to improve water quality and permit fish passage from the main stem of the Muskegon River into the cool refuge of Buckhorn Creek. With the safety concerns of the failure, dam removal became a priority. In addition to habitat restoration and dam safety, this project is also valuable for scenic and recreational reasons, and will maximize the State's significant investment in trout stocking at Mecosta County's adjacent Paris County Park.

BENEFITS

- *Provide emergency access to improve safety*
- *Infrastructure maintenance (100+ year-old dam)*
- *Permit year-round recreational enjoyment*
- *Tourism and related revenue – White Pine Trail and Paris Park as a destination*
- *Fish passage and refuge*
- *Conservation and restoration of natural stream habitat*

Buckhorn Creek is a unique, steep gradient stream. The removal of this dam will result in a high bridge over an exceptionally scenic, pure Michigan creek. The newly installed bridge will undoubtedly be a popular stop along the White Pine Trail as visitors take in the beautiful sounds and scenery of free-flowing water.

Work to remove the Buckhorn Dam began in 2021 with \$60,000 in project design and engineering funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The project quickly grew in scope and cost, as there are several public utilities involved and the White Pine Trail requires significant duty-rating for bridges. The Trail is a major thoroughfare for cyclists, foot traffic, and snowmobiles at this location, providing great enjoyment and tourism-based economic activity in the area. The DNR requires a bridge that can bear the weight of a trail groomer in wintertime; and the bridge needs to be able to support emergency access vehicles to the nearby recreational areas. In addition to creating fish passage and a spectacular new view of the opened stream, the bridge has costly infrastructure requirements.

In the interest of the restoration of the natural resource found in Buckhorn Creek, MRWA is raising \$1,818,031 towards dam removal and bridge replacement. Due to changing safety and maintenance requirements, the passage of time, and inflation, the cost of this project currently exceeds available resources. To complete this important and valuable project, MRWA is seeking an appropriation of \$250,000 in State funds to ensure adequate resources for the \$1.6 million in construction costs related to dam removal and bridge reconstruction activity (15%). Should cost savings be realized, MRWA, working in conjunction with the MI-DNR and Mecosta County Parks, would seek to further enhance this historic and scenic location with additional ecological restoration, tree planting, and wayfinding / interpretive signage.

FUNDING

Committed

<i>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service</i>	<i>\$60,000</i>
<i>MI DNR – Parks</i>	<i>\$704,700</i>
<i>MI DNR Fisheries</i>	<i>\$156,199</i>
<i>National Fish and Wildlife Fdn.</i>	<i>\$104,720</i>
<i>NFWF / DNR America the Beautiful</i>	<i>\$366,184</i>
<i>Mecosta County Parks</i>	<i>\$8,000</i>

Pending

<i>MI-DNR Parks (additional)</i>	<i>\$218,228</i>
<i>Great Lakes Fisheries Trust</i>	<i>\$200,000</i>
<i>This Request</i>	<i>\$250,000</i>

TOTAL	\$2,068,031
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MRWA and its partners are eager to see complete dam removal, bridge replacement, and full restoration of Buckhorn Creek to its natural condition in 2026.

PARTNERS

Mecosta County Parks Commission, Friends of the White Pine Trail, Michigan DNR, Michigan EGLE, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Muskegon River Watershed Assembly, and numerous private contractors



**Muskegon River Watershed
Assembly Board of Directors and Staff**

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