

Press release sent out by MCWC on Sunday evening.

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Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation

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MICHIGAN CITIZENS FOR WATER CONSERVATION QUESTIONS DEQ IN ISSUING NO ADVERSE RESOURCE IMPACT DETERMINATION TO NESTLE

Mecosta, Michigan – The DEQ approved Nestlé’s request for determination that pumping 70 million gallons of spring water yearly from Twin and Chippewa creeks in Osceola County near Evart would not adversely impact natural resources. This came after only a 3-week public comment period after the DEQ and Nestle went public with the proposed decision on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2006. Although the DEQ announced the public comment period would be extended until March 15, 2007, this week’s DEQ decision ignored the extended comment period because apparently Nestle refused to waive the deadline for the DEQ’s decision required by last year’s amendments to Michigan’s water laws. Citizen and riparian owner organizations like MCWC, who is leading the fight against Nestle, relied on the extended time period and retained experts to provide meaningful analyses, only to be stabbed by the DEQ’s premature decision.

The DEQ largely ignored comments; particularly those related to the effects on flows and levels of the headwaters of the two trout streams. Nestle and DEQ’s decision used selected measurements of the stream, which may have missed the primary area of effects and adverse impacts to a bountiful brook trout fishery.

Nestle claims has coddled the DEQ and other officials that it is a "good corporate citizen." But the facts no longer support the company’s courtship of the State for its water export needs. Despite the company’s claims to the contrary, a trial court and the Court of Appeals found pumping caused substantial harm to the stream and wetlands in Mecosta County, and the company recently mounted an attack on the heart of Michigan environmental laws to block citizens’ rights to maintain lawsuits to prevent such harm from happening. “Now Nestle apparently has refused to cooperate with the DEQ’s extension of time for public comment on the effects of its pumping on two blue ribbon trout streams,” says Terry Swier, President of Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation.

Dave Dempsey, Great Lakes Policy Advisor for Clean Water Action, said, “The legislature failed last year when it passed a new water law that allows water to be commercially exploited. This shows Michigan's new water law is a failure.”

Jim Olson, legal counsel for MCWC, said, “These type of private water exports that diminish our lakes and streams, whether in ships, trucks, or bottles, should not be permitted to continue. If the citizens of Michigan do not keep strict control on who, when, where and for what purpose someone is allowed to

export our water for private gain, we will find ourselves in dire straits when the global tidal wave of demand for water comes crashing on our shores.”

Nestlé has also been investigating a new “spring” water source near the White River in Newaygo County for the past three years. Nestle wants to truck the water from the Osceola and Newaygo sites about 20 miles to its Ice Mountain plant in Stanwood.

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