



The Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians

2605 N. West Bay Shore Drive • Peshawbestown, MI 49682-9275 • (231) 534-7750

March 21, 2012

Michigan Natural Resources Commission
PO Box 30257
Lansing, MI 48909-7757

Dear Michigan Natural Resources Commission:

By motion enacted today, the Tribal Council of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians (“GTB”) protests the renaming of the Traverse City State Park. The new sign proclaiming the “Keith J. Charters Traverse City State Park” is an outrage, given that Mr. Charters is responsible for an additional 825 feet of beach not being added to the park. We refer to the adjacent property immediately west of the state park beach area (including Mitchell Creek before it flows into East Bay), which is now open space and beachfront where our “Cross Creek” motel previously was located.

There had been a commitment by the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians and the Parks Division of the Department of Natural Resources to preserve this adjacent beach property as an addition to the state park. But Keith Charters squelched the deal, exerting his influence in his dual roles as Chair of the Natural Resources Commission (the “boss” of the DNR Parks Division) and Chair of the Natural Resources Trust Fund Board. Why? It doesn’t take much speculation; just look two miles northeast up the shoreline of East Grand Traverse Bay.

When this occurred, Mr. Charters wanted to sell the old Mountain Jack’s property that he owned; and his property was part of a proposal to acquire shoreline property for Acme Township that also was going to be presented to the Natural Resources Trust Fund Board for funding. Maybe he thought the other Trust Fund Board members would be reluctant to fund two projects on East Grand Traverse Bay. However, his duties as a public official required him to put the long-term public interest over his short-term financial self-interest. Clearly Mr. Charters had a conflict of interest and should not have interceded with the Parks Division.

The Natural Resources Trust Fund Board members should have been given the opportunity to answer the question, “Would you rather preserve forever more than 800 feet of beach adjacent to the state park beach, or purchase the Mountain Jack’s parking lot and dilapidated building?” (And his property did not even include the adjacent marina.) Instead, our understanding is that, as a result of Mr. Charters’ intercession, the Parks Division withdrew its support and never presented the tentative deal with the GTB to the Trust Fund Board.

We don’t communicate out of a sense of sour grapes. The GTB now has other long-term plans for the “Cross Creek” property adjacent to the state park; so we aren’t trying to resurrect

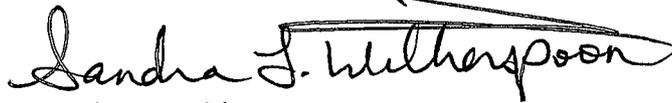
Michigan Natural Resource Commission

March 21, 2012

Page 2 of 2

that deal. But we are upset with the new state park signs suggesting that Mr. Charters was a champion for the people of the State of Michigan, because he breached the public trust by placing his self-interest ahead of the public's. The sign is a disgrace; it should be removed and the name should revert to the Traverse City State Park. We also suggest that an investigation be conducted to determine whether Mr. Charters violated any state or federal laws when he interceded with the Parks Division.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra L. Witherspoon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Sandra L. Witherspoon
Vice Chair

Cc: GTB Tribal Council