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For more information
David Waymire 517-290-3610

Anglers pleased at rejection of lease for Camp Grayling expansion, concerned about plans for permit

Anglers of the Au Sable is pleased that the Department of Natural Resources has rejected a proposal to nearly double the size of Camp Grayling, but remains concerned about a Memorandum of Understanding between the department and the Guard that would allow up to 52,000 acres of land to be used for electronic warfare training.

“We continue to be opposed to the expansion of Camp Grayling, by any method,” said Joe Hemming, president of Anglers of the Au Sable. “We support our military, but have serious questions about the department’s authority to issue a permit and the need for additional property for its electromagnetic warfare training. The Guard needs to improve its operations and relationships with local governments before it gets access to even more state property.”

Today’s announcement outlines conditions for the Guard to request permits that could add over 80 square miles to the 230 square miles of state land the Guard already has control over. The [MOU](#) provides for protections that address some of Anglers’ concerns, but still could give the Guard access to additional land.

More than 60 local government units, including the counties of Crawford, Kalkaska, Roscommon, Otsego and Bay, have passed resolutions opposing the Guard’s land grab. Also opposed to the initial proposal were the state’s largest environmental and conservation organizations, including Michigan United Conservation Clubs, Michigan Environmental Council, Michigan League of Conservation Voters, Sierra Club, Trout Unlimited and Anglers of the Au Sable.

Anglers pledged to remain vigilant as the DNR said it would be open to a permit process that, under current circumstances, allows little public input.

“We question the authority of the DNR to issue any permit that would allow electromagnetic warfare training on additional state land. The state law enabling the DNR states that it is “An act to protect the environment and natural resources of the state.” The Guard’s plans – and its stated goals of letting private companies use the property that it has access to for little or no compensation to the public – fail that test,” said Hemming.

The Guard has never explained why the 230 square miles it already controls is insufficient for the training it wishes to conduct. While the MOU prohibits use of PFAS or related compounds on the additional land, it does not address the Guard's foot dragging in cleaning up the contamination it has already caused that has limited public use of Lake Margrethe (a headwater of the Au Sable and Manistee rivers) and property in the Grayling area.

Anglers also is concerned about the impact of electromagnetic warfare training on the local ecology. The Au Sable and Manistee are unique natural resources that draw anglers from around the world for dry fly fishing. That fishery is heavily reliant on mayflies and other insects that use the unusual environment of the rivers, headwaters and wetlands that surround the river. The Guard has not signaled any intent to do any studies to show the impact of its use of electromagnetic signals in training on the insects, birds, mammals and fish in the affected area.

"We ask the DNR to provide detailed plans to allow public input in the permit process, and to require the Guard to do testing that will show the electromagnetic warfare activities will not hurt the environment," Hemming said. "We plan to remain engaged and vigilant as this process continues."

Visit [this](#) web site for more background on the issue.