

Environmental protection solution

As the Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner, I am understandably concerned about the prospect that the state may be unable to meet its environmental protection mission. The Detroit News article, "Merged state agency under fire" (June 21), indicated that the merger of two state agencies, the Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Natural Resources, into the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (MDNRE) could leave serious gaps in the realm of environmental protection. I share the fear voiced by James Clift, policy director for the Michigan Environmental Council that the merger of two underfunded agencies has resulted in one larger, underfunded one. That's not good for Michigan. Since 2003, I have advocated a local approach to wetlands management and protection. On several occasions I have approached the state and federal government and offered an alternative that would not only save money for the state, but would increase the level of environmental oversight and stewardship. It is clear that my original proposal, limited to wetlands, could be expanded to include many of the other functions that currently are the responsibility of the MDNRE. My proposal is simple: allow top-performing governmental entities, such as individual cities and counties, to implement specific parts of the Clean Water Act.

Here in Oakland County, we operate sophisticated water and wastewater facilities. We also manage storm water in ways to protect our waterways and we regulate the erosion control programs throughout our county. I know that my staff can effectively handle additional duties currently assigned to the MDNRE.

For the protection of our most precious resource — clean, fresh water, there has never been a better time to make this important change.

John P. Mc Culloch Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner, Waterford