

February 25, 2016

The Honorable Rick Snyder
Governor of Michigan
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Governor Snyder,

The decision related to Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) leadership may never be more important than it is today in the wake of the Flint crisis. The MDEQ was once a department clearly charged with protecting our state from hazards that threaten human health and the environment. It is apparent that this mission has been obscured. The result has been far-reaching, with significant ramifications for the more than nine million Michiganders who depend on clean resources for their drinking water, economic prosperity, and good health. This is most recently and tragically evidenced by the poisoning of Flint's tap water.

Your own task force, in its initial analysis of what caused the Flint water crisis, cited a culture of "technical compliance" at MDEQ leading to a "minimalist approach" that is "unacceptable and simply insufficient to the task of public protection." Moving forward, you must ensure that environmental protection decisions prioritize human health above all other criteria. This prioritization is critical for the health of Michigan residents, viability of our economy, and your legacy as our Governor.

As the leaders of Michigan's environmental and conservation organizations, with tens of thousands of members across the state, we believe that it is imperative that the state embrace a commitment to building a national reputation as a guardian of environmental quality and the health of its citizens. **A key first step in establishing this reputation is the appointment of a permanent MDEQ Director who has the necessary environmental and public health expertise to put the MDEQ on track to address the myriad environmental issues currently facing our state.** We respectfully submit this letter as our shared request that the following be considered when making your decision on the permanent MDEQ Director:



The Michigan DEQ must make protecting human health its No. 1 priority: Your administration and the new MDEQ Director must boldly commit the agency to making decisions based upon human health, science, and the enforcement of existing law. The Director must respect and rely on the expertise of the MDEQ staff, ensure the best experts are in the right positions, and allow sound science to drive decisions on a daily basis. While environmental protection should not be at odds with business development, the MDEQ needs to be the comfortable and confident defender of the health of our state's citizens *first and foremost*. This charge is critical as the MDEQ faces countless decisions in the coming months that impact the quality of our air, land, and water.

The Michigan DEQ must become a strong defender of our most vulnerable communities:

Unfortunately, Flint is not the only community in Michigan that has seen the health of its residents compromised by environmental factors beyond their control. Air and water quality problems afflict communities across our state. But there is no denying that they do so unevenly—forcing some of our state's residents to shoulder a disproportionate burden on their health and wellness. The MDEQ must both appreciate this chronic problem and take crucial steps toward integrating that understanding into the overall culture of the department and its approach to the regulatory process.

Michigan must be a national leader in environmental protection: MDEQ will not become greater than the sum of its parts merely by putting someone new in the Director's chair. While quality leadership is essential, your aspiration as Governor of the Great Lakes State ought to be the establishment of Michigan's position as a national trendsetter for ensuring our air, land, and water are clean, safe, and available for all of Michigan's residents. Michigan helped make Great Lakes restoration and protection a national priority for the U.S. Congress and the last two presidents. Our region cannot afford a lapse in leadership by a state that should be the Great Lakes' strongest champion.

We urge you to search extensively for an MDEQ Director who is ready to step beyond the politics to make progress on these goals. We encourage you to cast a wide net—looking beyond your own network and administration—to a broad pool of qualified candidates (including women and persons of color) who are up for the task. The environmental and conservation community stands committed to working with you in this search.



There are no simple answers to the Flint crisis. But there is a way forward. It starts with a commitment by you and your administration to stand up for the health and well-being of every man, woman, and child in the state. The critical choice of a permanent MDEQ Director is a key opportunity to redefine your legacy. True leadership will be measured only in actions that recognize Michigan's outstanding natural resources as a common good vital to the future of our state.

Sincerely yours,

Joel Brammeier
President & CEO
Alliance for the Great Lakes

Guy O. Williams
President & CEO
Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice

Rebecca Fedewa
Executive Director
Flint River Watershed Coalition

Liz Kirkwood
Executive Director
FLOW (For Love Of Water)

Laura Rubin
Executive Director
Huron River Watershed Council

Chris Kolb
President & CEO
Michigan Environmental Council

Lisa Wozniak
Executive Director
Michigan League of Conservation Voters

Mike Shriberg
Regional Executive Director, Great Lakes
The National Wildlife Federation

Lisa Brush
Executive Director
The Stewardship Network

Gail Gruenwald
Executive Director
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

Rachel Hood
Executive Director
West Michigan Environmental Action Council

