

## **PowerPoint Narrative: State Forest Campground Program Historical Review**

### Slide 1:

This PowerPoint presentation will provide background on why state forest campgrounds were developed and an historical overview on how they have been funded.

### Slide 2:

Camping was a means our forefathers used to explore the wilderness. As Michigan's population grew, more and more individuals were spending time in the diminishing wilderness to hunt and fish.

### Slide 3:

The origins of the state's fire protection program **and** the state forest campground program was prompted by an increase of forest fires that swept the state in the early 1900's.

### Slide 4:

In 1926, Spring Lake State Forest Campground was developed in Grand Traverse County as a method to control fires resulting from dispersed forest campers. During the following year, four more campgrounds were established. The state forest campground program reached over 180 campgrounds at it's high point in the 1970's, and is currently operating 145 campgrounds, the largest rustic recreation system east of the Mississippi River.

### Slide 5:

The state forest campgrounds were originally entirely funded with general fund tax dollars. Over time, the general fund contributions were reduced, requiring other means of support. In 1972 the first camping user fees were established. By Fiscal Year 2008, the general fund provided 33% of the program's budget.

### Slide 6:

Increased operational costs quickly outpaced program revenues near the turn of this century. This was at a time when revenues from the general fund support was declining, and the revenues from camper fees was stagnant.

### Slide 7:

Several areas of cost reductions have been implemented and camping fees have been increased to meet the program costs.

### Slide 8:

Increased camping fees did generate additional revenue; however the use of the campgrounds has declined and has pushed use elsewhere, including dispersed camping on state forest lands for free.

### Slide 9:

The impact of continued revenue reductions has resulted in the temporary closures of selected state forest campgrounds to reduce costs. These actions have also reduced the amount of user fees collected and it has pushed use elsewhere within the forest.

Slide 10:

Projected revenue shortfalls and a reduction in support from the general fund, resulted in an adjustment of user fees and a reduction in the number of campgrounds open for use in 2007. These actions occurred during a time of other economic stresses. As a result, the decrease in use has been more severe than anticipated.

Slide 11:

In 2009, the general fund budget reduction of \$70,800 resulted in 12 campground closures. The criteria for selecting the closed campgrounds include the availability of other public or private campgrounds in the area; the campground supported a state trail recreational opportunity; costs to maintain the campground; travel distance to maintain the campground; and low camping use.

Slide 12:

Fiscal Year 2010 budget is an unknown, but we need to plan for the potential of further general fund cuts to the program.

Slide 13:

The DNR Fire Officers are integral to the campground operations, providing their services when not fighting forest fires. They manage all seasonal workers who are hired each summer to assist in maintaining recreational facilities, and also to oversee all major capital outlay projects that are pursued within their management unit. Because only a portion of the fire officer's time is directed towards recreational activities, recreation program funds only pay a portion of these individuals' salaries and wages. Future cuts in any of the many programs that support these individual's employment will not only hurt the program that is being reduced, but could have a negative impact in the other program areas.

Slide 14:

If further general fund cuts occur, then the DNR will need to look at elimination of the non-fee based programs that are supported by general fund tax dollars, including the non-motorized forest pathway program, as well as fee based programs like state forest campgrounds.