Michigan's Designated Natural Rivers and Short-Term Rentals Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How are short-term rentals defined by the Natural Rivers Program?**
   Short-term rental means a single-family dwelling with no more than 3 bedrooms offered as a residential rental facility for rental periods of less than 30 days.

2. **How are short-term rentals on Michigan's designated Natural Rivers regulated?**
   Michigan currently has 16 designated Natural Rivers – see map. Short-term rentals are an allowed use within the Natural Rivers district if they comply with the definition above and are not prohibited by local zoning ordinances.

3. **What is the difference between state-zoned and locally-zoned Natural Rivers?**
   State-zoned Natural Rivers include areas in which the DNR is directly responsible for Natural Rivers zoning on private lands.

   Locally-zoned Natural Rivers include areas where county and township governments elect to establish and administer Natural River zoning controls on private lands. In these instances, the DNR serves as a resource and advisor to local governments on private land Natural River matters. While the DNR has authority to rescind the ability for local units of government to administer Natural Rivers zoning directly, it can neither take control of a local zoning case nor overrule specific zoning decisions made by local units of government.

   Please reach out to DNR Natural Rivers staff if interested in determining whether the DNR or a local unit of government is responsible for Natural Rivers zoning on private lands in a particular area. See Natural Rivers Zoning Authority for more information.

4. **Can local zoning ordinances further restrict short-term rentals on Natural Rivers?**
   Yes, in both state-zoned and locally-zoned areas, townships and counties can have stricter development standards than those set forth by the DNR. Natural Rivers Program staff are available to assist local units of government review and update their ordinances and can share examples from other townships that have incorporated short-term rental restrictions.

5. **Can Natural Rivers regulations address behavior or conduct at short-term rentals?**
   No, the Natural Rivers Program is a zoning-based program. It cannot directly regulate issues such as noise, litter, parking, or traffic. These issues are more effectively addressed by local ordinances and law enforcement personnel rather than by Natural River regulations. Concerns about short-term rentals should be relayed to the local zoning authority (township or county depending on the community), or the township supervisor or county administrator.

   All complaints related to illegal fishing or other resource violations should be reported to the Report All Poaching (RAP) line 1-800-292-7800 (call or text). Renter behavior complaints can be reported to your local police department.