



MICHIGAN REPORT

MACKINAC CENTER CALLS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE BOARD

If Governor Jennifer Granholm had used the Environmental Science Board, rather than dissolving it, she could have saved the state money, the Mackinac Center for Public Policy argued in an editorial released Friday.

But Department of Environmental Quality officials said the board was not equipped to do some of the things former MESB Executive Director Keith Harrison, who wrote the piece, said the board could have done.

Mr. Harrison argued in the Viewpoint that Ms. Granholm essentially disbanded the board after it criticized a study proposal by the Department of Community Health on human chemical exposures.

“The MESB recommended ways to improve the proposal, but the proposal was never revised,” Mr. Harrison said. “The governor never again requested the MESB’s scientific evaluation of any environmental issue. Instead, the administration has chosen to pay substantial sums to outside experts and consulting firms for advice on such issues as the exposures to dioxin along the Tittabawassee and Saginaw rivers; the environmental impacts of mining the Upper Peninsula’s mitigation strategies for the emerald ash borer; and the effects of groundwater withdrawals.”

And the board would save money on these

tasks because its members worked for free. The only costs were some travel reimbursements and the cost of printing reports, he said.

Mr. Harrison called on either Ms. Granholm to revoke the executive order that eliminated the board or the Legislature to reject the order.

“At a time when elected officials claim to be strapped for revenues, it makes no sense to eliminate a renowned, cost-effective board,” he said.

Robert McCann, spokesperson for the DEQ, agreed that the idea of the board had merit. “The idea behind the Environmental Science Board has always been a positive,” he said.

But Mr. McCann said the board would not have had the resources to do some of the reviews Mr. Harrison proposed. “We need to make sure that we have the very best people looking at it,” he said. “You’d be having a real difficult time finding people who would be willing to put that on their plate voluntarily.”

He noted, for instance, that none of the consultants qualified to review the Kennecott Eagle Minerals mine application were from Michigan. “You couldn’t necessarily be able to find someone around here who would do it,” he said.