

Statement of  
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Testimony before the Subcommittee on Parks  
United States House of Representatives

Hearing on HR 3532, The Michigan Lighthouse and Maritime Heritage Act

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Kirk Lindquist, President of the Michigan Lighthouse Fund, the only statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to securing financial resources for Michigan lighthouse stewardship organizations. I am pleased to be here to present comments and discuss the merits of HR 3532, the Michigan Lighthouse and Maritime Heritage Act.

This bill would do three things to help preserve and support local efforts to protect Michigan's maritime resources.

- Generate public awareness and encourage regional partnerships,
- Develop management alternatives for long term protection and public enjoyment of these cultural resources, and
- Generate enthusiasm in potential donors through the case statements developed in the resource study mandated by this act.

#### Regional Partnerships

Lighthouses are much more than historic structures. They are sources of identity for Michigan's lake shore communities. They are featured in promotion materials, economic development plans, and business brochures. Lighthouses were huge financial investments when they were established. They were built because the Great Lakes maritime economy demanded them. Through this act, these communities will develop an understanding of how and why their cities and towns have grown and developed as they have. The preservation focus of this act will create a generation of lighthouse enthusiasts and advocates. The inventory and management plans developed through this act will help generate regional pride and commitment to their maritime heritage, and explain and demonstrate to others that their region has historical and cultural value.

#### Management Alternatives

The preparation of management and implementation plans developed through this inventory is a crucial second step. The condition of historic maritime structures needs to be documented, and the cost of individual projects should be estimated. As communities understand the maintenance needs of their historic structures, they can make management decisions linking lighthouses and maritime museums to the public's interest in cultural tourism. The protection agenda should place these projects in priority order. This list should be provided to potential donors and local governments. Such a management strategy will illustrate the benefits of regional partnerships and encourage the mobilization of regional financial resources.

#### Regional Financial Support

Case statements prepared through this planning process will help expand donor awareness of the importance of maritime resources to community quality of life and economic growth. This in turn, will lead to increased financial investment. Tourism is Michigan's second largest employment sector. Any action that brings additional tourism dollars to Michigan's maritime communities will be a boon for local economic development efforts. Lighthouses, life saving stations, nautical museums and historic ships are significant tourist destinations. Economics dictated their need. Economics continues to be an important imperative for their protection and preservation. The creation of donor and government enthusiasm for preservation investments is a very important consequence of this planning effort.

A recent report on cultural tourism made the following observation: "When people have a stake in their community, they feel compelled to become involved in maintaining the advantages that come from the increase in their quality of life." (Center for Arts and Public Policy, Wayne State University, 2004). Investments in Michigan's maritime resources contribute to enhancements of a community's perceived identity and character. Further, a community's quality of life is what attracts and retains the talent pool needed to sustain its economic growth and vitality.

Lighthouse and other maritime interests in Michigan strongly support this legislation. This bill is important as a tool for preservation and protection, and as an instrument of economic growth of Michigan's coastal communities. It will generate local investment as it provides a framework for the long term protection of Michigan's maritime resources.

This concludes my prepared remarks.

Thank you very much for the invitation to testify about issues addressed by this bill. I would be happy to respond to any questions you or the subcommittee might have.