

# Land reserve issue for state park may be decided next month

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After 16 months in limbo, a proposal to designate Ludington State Park as Michigan's first state land reserve will surface again if the Michigan Natural Resources Commission finally takes action in November to approve a process for reviewing the petition.

However, a DNR official does not believe that the local request will meet the newly established criteria.

"I don't think it will be considered administratively complete," said Lynne Boyd, manager of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' minerals lease management section. The State Land Reserve Act became law in 1998, following the 1997 inclusion of 2,100 acres of Ludington State Park land on the state's oil and gas lease sale list.

Public outcry about the planned lease sale caused the NRC to remove the park from the 1997 lease sale, but several local people and groups want a permanent ban on selling leases there.

In 1999 several Ludington-area agencies, including Hamlin Township, Hamlin Lake Association, Hamlin Lake Preservation Society and Hamlin Lake Improvement boards, formed a coalition to seek state land reserve designation for Ludington State Park. The group then hired the Michigan Land Use Institute of Benzonia to help with the nominating process.

The coalition informed the NRC about its intention to gain special status for the park in June 1999, and then formally applied for State Land Reserve status in February 2000.

The minimum requirements to qualify for classification as a State Land Reserve are that the property must include at least 640 contiguous acres of state owned land and contain at least one or more of the following features: critical dunes, high risk areas, wetlands, endangered species protection areas, a wilder-ness or natural area, a natural river or other features of environmental sensitivity.

The NRC Policy Committee on Land Management would also analyze the property to determine if there is a need to establish a buffer zone to eliminate the potential of oil and gas being drained by nearby wells.

Boyd said the NRC will study the latest draft of requirements for the land reserve designation during its meeting today in Holland. She said the commission could then take action to establish the process during its November meeting.

She did, however, say she does not believe the petition for Ludington State Park will meet the proposed requirements and she said the local backers may need to provide more information before the NRC will consider the request.

Hamlin Township Supervisor Kathryn Griffith was not dismayed by that news.

"Considering we did not know what they were going to base the criteria on, it is not surprising," she said. "We'll find out what we need to resubmit it, get it in order and try again."

Griffith said Arlin Wasserman of the Michigan Land Use Institute will...