



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tuesday, January 31, 2017

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Sierra Club calls for end to environmental agency budget cuts

Indianapolis, I.N. -- **The Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter** today called on state lawmakers to increase funding for the Indiana Department of Environmental Management and the Department of Natural Resources to help attract more businesses and jobs to the state.

"We support Gov. Eric Holcomb's proposal to make Indiana a 'magnet for jobs' as described in his 'five pillars' legislative agenda for the 2017 session," said Chapter Director Bowden Quinn. "But creative new businesses and talented young job-seekers won't be attracted to a state that continues to shortchange its environmental agencies and thereby allows its air, land and water to deteriorate."

In the 2001-2003 biennial budget, the legislature appropriated more than \$700 million to the environment, which was two percent of total appropriations, according to State Budget Agency data. In the 2015-2017 budget, the total appropriation had fallen by more than \$50 million to \$648 million, which was barely more than one percent of total appropriations.

Making matters worse, the previous two administrations have instructed government agencies not to spend all of the funds that the legislature appropriated for them. Over the last 10 years, IDEM and IDNR have left more than \$300 million of their appropriations unspent.

"It's time to end the practice of budget reversions, especially for our environmental and conservation agencies," Quinn said. "IDEM and IDNR are severely understaffed and can no longer perform all of the functions needed to protect our environment and conserve our wildlife and natural areas."

The IDNR has tried to make up for its budget shortfall by increasing logging in our state forests by 400 percent to fund its Division of Forestry. The extent of the logging is heartbreaking for the many Hoosiers who enjoy hiking in the woods, only to be met by vast stretches of tree stumps and brushy debris instead of the magnificent trees of our native forests.

"It's wrong to have the agency that is meant to protect our natural resources so dependent for its funding on an industry that can do such great harm to some of our most beautiful forests," said Quinn.

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About the Sierra Club

The Sierra Club is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 2.4 million members and supporters. In addition to helping people from all backgrounds explore nature and our outdoor heritage, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit www.sierraclub.org.