

SEARCH  
DETNEWS.COM

GO



Tuesday, August 14, 2001

[Return to Editorials](#)
[The Detroit News](#)
[E-mail this story](#)
[Comment on this story](#)
[Previous story](#)
[Next story](#)


## SITE INDEX

[Homepage](#)  
[Search](#)  
[CyberSurveys](#)  
[News Talk](#)  
[Sports Talk](#)  
[Lions Talk](#)  
[Wings Talk](#)  
[Tiger Talk](#)  
[Car Talk](#)  
[Tech Talk](#)  
[Horoscope](#)  
[Hot Sites](#)  
[Lottery](#)  
[Weather](#)  
[Staff](#)

## NEWS

[Autos](#)  
[Joyrides](#)  
[Business](#)  
[Careers](#)  
[Census](#)  
[Columnists](#)  
[Commuting](#)  
[Detroit History](#)  
[Editorials](#)  
[Health](#)  
[Metro / State](#)  
[Livingston](#)  
[Macomb](#)  
[Oakland](#)  
[Wayne](#)  
[On Detroit](#)  
[Nation / World](#)  
[Obituaries](#)  
[Death Notices](#)  
[Politics / Govt.](#)  
[Real Estate](#)  
[Religion](#)  
[Schools](#)  
[Special Reports](#)  
[Technology](#)

## SPORTS

[Sports Home](#)  
[Lions/NFL](#)  
[Red Wings/NHL](#)  
[Pistons/NBA](#)  
[Shock/WNBA](#)  
[Tigers/Baseball](#)  
[MSU](#)  
[U-M](#)  
[More Colleges](#)  
[Golf Guide](#)  
[High Schools](#)  
[Motor Sports](#)  
[Outdoors](#)  
[More Sports](#)  
[Scoreboards](#)

## Engler's position on gas, oil drilling could backfire

The bottom line is that we cannot afford to make enemies in Washington

By Lana Pollack / Special to The Detroit News

Gov. John Engler, a seasoned and highly successful politician, is being uncharacteristically reckless in his support of drilling for oil and gas along the Great Lakes shoreline. In asserting that Michigan's right to permit lakeside drilling trumps federal law, Engler is essentially telling Congress to buzz off on Great Lakes issues.

[Comment on this story](#)  
[Send this story to a friend](#)  
[Get Home Delivery](#)

This is especially senseless in the face of our biggest Great Lakes concerns -- water diversion threats and invasion of nonindigenous (exotic) species that travel in ballast water of unregulated international ships. Michigan will need strong congressional allies in these fights. Unfortunately, the governor's position on shoreline drilling undermines our interests in these issues.

There's been a fair amount of rhetoric flying between Washington and Michigan on who has control over the Great Lakes when it comes to matters like shoreline oil drilling, ballast water controls and water diversion. Gov. Engler would like us to believe Michigan calls all the shots. However, reality is a little trickier -- on jurisdictional authority and on politics.

While the state has jurisdiction in many instances, Washington has authority over federally protected wetlands, navigable tributaries of the lakes and the lakes themselves. When decisions are made on directional drilling, the key question of jurisdiction will be determined by the location of drill rigs and the oil and gas they tap and by resources that may be impacted in case of accidental spills.

Congress can control elements of the oil and gas drilling controversy through federal appropriations and the Army Corps of Engineers. Clearly, Michigan does not hold all the jurisdictional cards on this issue and trivializing the congressional role weakens our voice in that pivotal body.

Engler's behavior is putting Michigan at a political disadvantage. The governor's disdain for Congress on oil and gas drilling could come back to haunt us on important issues. President Bush tried to talk Canada Prime Minister Chretien into sending Canadian water to our parched Southwestern states and apparently has now backed off. Although Chretien refused Bush's overture, the Great Lakes, which we share with Canada, represent nearly 90 percent of North America's fresh surface

**ENTERTAINMENT**

Entertainment  
▶ Casino Guide  
▶ Movie Finder  
▶ TV Listings  
Crossword

**HOMESTYLE**

Homestyle home  
▶ Decorating  
▶ Food  
▶ Gardening  
▶ Home  
Improvement  
▶ Home Life  
▶ Home Tech  
▶ Wine Report

**PHOTOS**

Sports  
Red Wings  
Lions  
Autos  
Joyrides  
News  
History

Copyright 2001  
The Detroit News.

Use of this site  
indicates your  
agreement to the  
[Terms of Service](#)  
(updated  
08/09/2001).

water. Diversion battles are coming up quickly and we will soon need strong congressional allies to protect our water.

The list of issues for which we need congressional support is long. In addition to diversion and restriction of ballast water, we need federal funding for wastewater treatment plant upgrades, improvement in drinking water infrastructure, sea lamprey control, toxic sediment removal and more. The bottom line is that we cannot afford to make enemies in Washington, or with the governors of the other Great Lakes states, especially when the congressional delegations from the Great Lakes states are shrinking, not growing.

Even with a conservative assessment, the costs to Michigan's environment, public health and economy fly in the face of all possible benefits that may accrue from drilling. The oil and gas reserves are marginal -- offering perhaps a couple dozen long-term jobs, modest royalties and no more oil than would meet the nation's needs for a handful of days. This can hardly measure up against the attendant threats to the shore lines in the tourist-rich Lake Michigan dune area and critical Lake Huron wetlands.

On grave threats facing the Great Lakes, Michigan needs assistance, friendships and alliances that the oil and gas industry -- or even the president -- cannot provide. Michigan needs to work in cooperation with other governors and with congressional delegations from the Great Lakes states, Florida and other coastally sensitive areas. The governor's Natural Resources appointees and state geologist are looking to him before throwing the switch on lakeshore drilling -- and our potential allies are watching.

*Lana Pollack is president of the Michigan Environmental Council in Lansing. Write letters to The Detroit News, 615 W. Lafayette, Detroit, Mich. 48226, or fax to (313) 222-6417 or send e-mail to [letters@detnews.com](mailto:letters@detnews.com).*

▶ [Comment on this story](#)

▶ [Previous story](#) ▶ [Back to index](#) ▶ [Next story](#)