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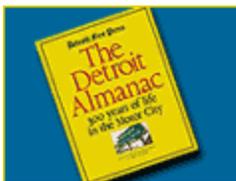
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## State Senate task force will study condition of Great Lakes

*Thursday, August 16, 2001*

### ASSOCIATED PRESS

LANSING -- A new state Senate committee is being set up to study the overall condition of the Great Lakes and recommend ways to protect them.

Sen. Ken Sikkema, a Grandville Republican who will lead the task force, said Thursday the committee will look at the impact on the Great Lakes from drilling, sewage overflows and the invasion of foreign species such as zebra mussels.

The task force may ask the U.S. Senate to pressure Canada to remove oil and gas wells from its side of the lakes, Sikkema said.

The Michigan Natural Resources Commission plans to decide next month whether increase the number of drilling leases in the Great Lakes.

But Sikkema and Senate Majority Leader Dan DeGrow, R-Port Huron, said the task force is needed to look at the lakes' overall health, not just the effects of directional drilling from shore.

"We have more at stake than other states or (Canadian) provinces," DeGrow said. "We have to take the lead on Great Lakes issues."

Sikkema said the task force will begin its work early next month.

The Senate will likely start work on legislation proposed by the task force in January, DeGrow said.

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