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House panel opposes Lake drilling

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By *Associated Press*

LANSING -- A Michigan House committee Tuesday approved a bill to prohibit drilling for gas and oil under the Great Lakes unless the state is facing an energy crisis.

The House Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Committee voted 7-3 to approve the bill after months of testimony on whether the state should continue approving leases to drill under the Great Lakes from the shore.

"The people of Michigan do not want directional drilling," said GOP Rep. Scott Shackleton of Sault Ste. Marie, who sponsored the bill.

The legislation would allow a drilling permit to be issued if the Legislature declared an energy crisis. If the bill becomes law, drilling that began before it took effect could continue.

Despite the committee's approval, a few Republican members said they want to amend the bill when it's taken up by the full House.

They want the state ban to coincide with a federal law recently signed by President Bush that bans federal agencies from issuing permits for new drilling through September 2003 to study the environmental effects. A few Republican lawmakers want the state's ban to end around the same time as the federal ban.

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