PRIVATIZATION IN MICHIGAN STATE PARKS

Michigan has acquired many state parks over the years that are not unique in either their natural resources or their historic value, so the state should sell a number of its parks, says Russ Harding of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy.

Returning these parks to private ownership would provide several benefits, explains Harding:

- The cash-strapped state would realize a considerable windfall from the sale of these properties, which often contain waterfront and other features prized by private citizens.
- The liquidation of these properties would allow state park managers to focus their limited resources on protecting the state’s truly outstanding natural and historic sites.
- Taxpayer-subsidized competition with private campgrounds would be reduced significantly.
- The privatized properties would be placed back on local tax rolls.

However, the sale of any state park will generate political resistance and park officials will resist a sale simply because of turf protection, says Harding.

But creating revenue and competing with private campgrounds is not the reason the Michigan Legislature created the state park system; the system will only be stronger if it is comprised of parks that represent the most important natural and historic treasures of Michigan, says Harding.


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