



Friends of the St. Joe River Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 1794
South Bend, Indiana 46634
www.fotsjr.org

Established 1994
501(c)(3) Not-for-Profit

March 18, 2021

The Honorable Chairman Gutwein
Chair, Environmental Affairs Committee
State of Indiana House of Representatives

Re: Senate Bill 389

Representative Gutwein,

The Friends of the St. Joseph River Association is a bi-state, non-profit organization working to improve water resources in the St. Joseph River Watershed of Lake Michigan. As the lead partner in the development of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency funded *St. Joseph River Watershed Landscape Level Wetland Functional Assessment*, we are committed to protecting and restoring important wetland resources throughout our watershed.

According to the wetland assessment referenced above, there is a direct connection between flooding, water quality problems and wetland loss in our watershed. Simply speaking, all wetlands act as sponges on the landscape. We are struggling to find places to store and filter the water we have now as a result of wetland loss. The isolated wetlands protected by Indiana's state regulations are no less significant for storage than those with federal protection. Therefore, our Board of Directors voted to oppose Senate Bill 389, which would repeal protections for state regulated wetlands in Indiana.

We have been assisting communities in Michigan and Indiana with efforts to mitigate flood hazards, protect public health and maintain drainage water infrastructure. The positive impacts of these efforts would be canceled out by additional wetland loss. The Friends of the St. Joe River Association strongly encourages you, and all the members of the Environmental Affairs Committee, to consider the cumulative negative impacts of the loss of isolated wetlands. Please do not reduce state protections for wetlands. Vote no on Senate Bill 389 if given the opportunity.

Sincerely,

Matthew A. Meersman
President

Cc: House Environmental Affairs Committee members

"A Bi-State Organization for Watershed-Wide Improvement & Protection"