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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

STEVENS T. MASON BUILDING, LANSING, MICHIGAN 48926

RALPH A. MAC MULLAN, Director

May 20, 1970

Mr. William Browning  
Conservation & Outdoor Education Coordinator  
Ann Arbor Public Schools  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Dear Bill:

As you know, Donald Richards, Education & Training Specialist with the Information and Education Division, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and I attended a meeting at the Thurston Elementary School in Ann Arbor at 3 p.m. on Monday, May 18, 1970, to discuss the problem which came to light when construction started on a planned drain connecting the Thurston Nature Center pond with a new junior high school. The members of the school administration and Nature Center Coordinator, Melvin Larson, did an excellent job of outlining the steps leading up to the present situation.

It is our opinion that the Board of Education, the Administration, the architect and the conservation and outdoor education coordinator for the Ann Arbor Schools did a thorough job of planning for the site. The educational needs of children were integrated into the building plan, the junior high school site, its relation to the Thurston Site and the community.

Given all the facts, the plans seem very logical. A point of contention is the establishment of a drain tile through a fine piece of hardwoods to empty into a pond. Considering reasonable alternatives, there appears to be no other feasible way of removing run-off from a portion of the junior high school site. In our opinion, a carefully constructed drain with soil replaced and some replanting done will be nearly unnoticeable in a few years and will not detract from the nature center.

We believe that the resistance of the community to construction of the drain through "their" woodlot was due primarily to a lack of communication. Although key people were aware of the planned construction, the public was not sufficiently informed. Had the problems of drainage and the action of government to affect the best plan been made a part of the Thurston School curriculum thus allowing

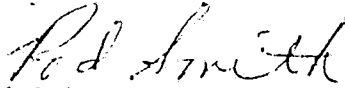


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youth to participate, and had information meetings on this subject been held in the community in conjunction with the Thurston Nature Center group and the Ann Arbor Schools, the resistance could have been reduced. There will always be opposition to any action but we are convinced the majority of the community would have approved the drain had they had a chance to examine the alternatives.

In summary---the plans for site development (including the transplanting of many large trees to enhance the junior high site) appear to be the most logical in view of the situation. Resistance to the plans, in our opinion, resulted from a lack of understanding on the part of the community which has a very deep interest in their unique natural area.

Sincerely,



Rod Smith, Supervisor  
Education & Training



Donald J. Richards  
Education & Training Specialist

RS:kb