

MI Great Lakes Plan:

Our Path to Protect, Restore, and Sustain Michigan's Natural Treasures

Dave Hansen



Travel Michigan

The health of the people of Michigan, our economy, and our quality of life depends on clean water and productive land that is sustainable far into the future.

The Great Lakes represent one-fifth of the world's fresh surface water and provide unparalleled recreational and economic opportunities to the 10 million people that call Michigan home. Studies show that the Great Lakes provide Michigan with 823,000 jobs that represent nearly 25 percent of Michigan's payroll¹. Additionally, Great Lakes tourism generates billions of dollars each year from those who spend leisure time around our lakes and streams.



Randall McCune

Michigan's water resources have been the catalyst for the economic development that moved us to international prominence. But those events have also left some communities with a legacy of pollution from contaminated sediments, invasive species, inadequate sewer systems, and uncontrolled development. These pressures put the lakes at risk – threatening our health and economic viability.



M. Hodgkins

Michigan's citizens want solutions to these challenges; solutions that protect our water and capitalize on unique opportunities for economic transformation.

Economic Value of the Great Lakes

Michigan is the Great Lakes state with more freshwater coastline than any other state in the nation. Our lakes, rivers, and streams define not only our boundary but also provide a path to environmental, economic, and social progress. Michigan's Great Lakes provide:

- *Jobs for nearly 823,000 Michigan residents,*
- *A world-renown commercial and sport fishery - collectively valued at more than \$4 billion annually,*
- *Breathtaking scenic views and charming coastal resort communities that are the backbone of the state's \$12.8 billion travel industry,*
- *Water for an agriculture and food industry that is now the state's second largest industry,*
- *Invaluable source water to Michigan manufacturing that currently produces 60 percent of the continent's steel and 60 percent of automobiles made in North America,*
- *The basis for a charter boat industry that provides Michigan's economy with an estimated \$21 million in economic benefits annually,*
- *A maritime transportation network linking North America's heartland with ports and markets throughout the world, and*
- *First class harbors and marinas that generate \$2 billion annually from the recreational boating industry.*



Robert DeJonge



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“Our responsibility is to protect, clean, and enjoy these waters and teach the world how to smartly manage a finite and increasingly valuable global resource.

Our opportunity is to capitalize on Michigan’s location at the center of North America’s freshwater coast.’ In doing so, we can sustainably grow Michigan’s economy and that of the whole Great Lakes region.”

- Lt. Governor John D. Cherry

Dave Hansen

Moving Forward: Our Vision for Michigan’s Great Lakes

Investing in the Great Lakes = Jobs and Economic Transformation

The Great Lakes are integral to the past, present, and future economic vitality of Michigan and the region. In 2006, the Brookings Institution² reported that a regional investment of \$25 billion to implement the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy would result in short and long-term returns of \$80-100 billion, including:

- \$6.5-11.8 billion direct benefits from tourism, fishing, and recreation;
- \$50-125 million reduced costs to municipalities; and
- \$12-19 billion increased coastal property values in Areas of Concern.

Further analysis by Michigan Sea Grant determined that this type of regional investment would result in a present, tangible value of \$7-13 billion for Michigan¹. That estimate does not include the additional value added by making Michigan more attractive to talented workers and new businesses.

Past protection and restoration efforts have shown significant benefit to Michigan’s economy. Since 2003, Michigan has invested more than \$1.5 billion in local water and sewer infrastructure improvements that have created 17,000 jobs⁴. Future investments in infrastructure improvements will better protect public health and result in additional job creation. The U.S. Conference of Mayors Water Council⁵ estimates that adding one new job in the local public water and sewer sector creates 3.68 new, supporting jobs – a multiplier effect that will significantly boost Michigan’s economy.

Part of that multiplier effect is tourism and water-related leisure activities. From 2000 to 2007, Michigan saw

a 33 percent increase in tourism-related employment in coastal counties representing an increase of almost 20,000 jobs, an indication of the value of the Great Lakes to this sector and the increasing importance of the tourism sector to Michigan’s economy¹.

The MI-Great Lakes Plan

In response to the economic and environmental imperative for protecting the Great Lakes, the Michigan Office of the Great Lakes (OGL), with input from thousands of stakeholders at more than 20 meetings across Michigan, is leading an effort to prepare and implement a Michigan Great Lakes Plan (MI-Great Lakes Plan) to protect, restore, and sustain the Great Lakes for current and future generations.

While the 2005 Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC) Strategy reflects the protection and restoration efforts needed throughout the entire Great Lakes basin, the MI-Great Lakes Plan complements the GLRC by providing specific direction within Michigan. It addresses the recommendations of the GLRC, and highlights the specific needs, challenges, and strengths of our state. The fundamental premise of the MI-Great Lakes Plan is that the economy and the long-term wellbeing of our citizens are dependent on the health of the waters that feed the lakes, and the nearshore areas that buffer the lakes.

Existing federal and state resources are insufficient to address the future needs to support local protection and restoration efforts such as brownfield cleanup, removal of contaminated sediments, habitat protection, and flow restoration. Michigan citizens recognize that it will take a collaborative investment of federal, state and local governments, tribes, nongovernmental organizations, and private funds to realize the full economic and societal benefits that will result from protecting and restoring Michigan’s Great Lakes.

Public Input: Recommendations and Opportunities

Across Michigan, citizens and organizations agree that to protect and restore the Great Lakes, we must be firmly committed to their environmental and economic importance, adopt sustainable development policies that protect our water resources, and act to take advantage of the unique, long-term economic opportunities and responsibilities provided to the Great Lakes state.

To meet this commitment, Michigan needs to:

- Ensure that alternative energy sources are pursued and that the environmental impacts of current energy sources are minimized;
- Restore and delist Michigan's 14 Areas of Concern;
- Protect human health associated with fish consumption advisories and harmful algal blooms;
- Restore beaches by controlling pollutants such as phosphorus, pharmaceuticals, and bacterial contamination;
- Prevent the introduction and control the spread and of new invasive species;
- Update old and deteriorating infrastructure throughout the state;
- Ensure effective and efficient management of urban stormwater;
- Implement and share effective land use planning tools throughout the state and across county boundaries;
- Increase opportunities for the public to access the Great Lakes and our inland lakes and streams; and
- Protect and restore critical fish and wildlife habitat.

"It is our collective vision that the Great Lakes and the rivers bringing water to the Great Lakes will be the premier freshwater resource in the world and will sustain a healthy environment, strong economy, and high quality of life long into the future. This includes the vision of a sustainable Great Lakes ecosystem that ensures environmental integrity and supports economically viable and healthy communities. It is also our vision to protect and restore into the future the integrity of the Great Lakes ecosystem through collaborative partnerships."



Elaine Sterrett Isely

The MI-Great Lakes Plan highlights the tremendous collaboration on the part of all who participated in its development and also identifies potential impediments to achieving further successful protection and restoration efforts. While there are numerous specific protection and restoration recommendations, there are also some common approaches identified to address the challenges, including:

- Increasing collaboration and communication among partners, especially when implementing environmental management efforts;
- Committing to the efficient and effective use of existing resources;
- Committing additional federal and state funding to develop long-term sustainable protection and restoration programs;
- Expanding educational efforts to build community-based, grassroots stewardship; and
- Developing a statewide policy statement on the importance of Great Lakes protection and restoration.

Implementing the Plan

Our goal is to ensure that the MI-Great Lakes Plan doesn't join other Great Lakes plans gathering dust on shelves. As part of the MI-Great Lakes Plan, an implementation team will be created to assist federal, state, and local efforts to enact the recommendations of the Plan. The implementation team will track progress and will promote the cooperation and collaboration needed to ensure successful follow-up.

Sustainable Development

At forums across Michigan, citizens reiterated that we must consider Great Lakes protection and restoration policies in light of their economic importance, recognize the value of the Great Lakes, and develop policies that protect this economic asset. The Michigan Land Use Leadership Council report, the upcoming Michigan Climate Action Council report, the ongoing work to focus Michigan on alternative energy, and the MI-Great Lakes Plan provide important recommendations for Michigan's federal, state, and local policymakers. State agencies can play a key support role, but with the overwhelming majority of Great Lakes shoreline in private ownership, sustainability is often based in local decisions and actions, whether by communities, individuals, or the private sector.

The opportunity for sustainable water-based economic development is literally all around us – responsible development can reclaim waterfront for residences, marinas, ports, restaurants, hotels, and offices. Success stories demonstrate that we can do all of that while sustaining the ecological integrity of our dunes, beaches, wetlands, and rocky headlands that make the Great Lakes so beautiful and desirable for solitary walks, sunning and swimming, boating, fishing, and recreation.

Michigan Sea Grant

The Next Wave – A Blue Water Economy

There is another transformational economic opportunity that lies before us. We know that in the past, water was at the root of the wealth that was built in the Great Lakes region -- both as a conduit for commodities and as a manufacturing resource. We know today that water is still critical for Michigan businesses -- including biofuels -- and, as global water shortages grow, the Great Lakes may again be a magnet for industries that rely on freshwater resources.

There is great potential in economic growth based around new specialized industries related to water technologies, wind energy production, pollution remediation, and eco-tourism. Recent studies indicate that water-related technology is a \$500 billion sector annually, and that approximately 22,000 jobs could be generated for every \$1 billion invested in water conservation programs⁶.

In the past, we relied on the lakes for industrial activity. In the future, Michigan's economy will increasingly depend on the Great Lakes for the quality of life they provide. What other state can claim the breathtaking beauty of both a sunrise side dawn over Lake Huron and a picturesque evening sunset in the western sky above Lake Michigan.

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This brochure was produced by the Office of the Great Lakes. For additional information or to obtain a copy of the MI-Great Lakes Plan, visit www.michigan.gov/deqgreatlakes and click on Protection and Restoration or email DEQ-GreatLakesRestoration@michigan.gov.



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