FLOW is a Great Lakes law and policy center based in Traverse City, Michigan, that educates and empowers the public to understand and use the public trust doctrine to protect and enjoy our freshwater resources.

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Note: This guide is for educational and general informational purposes only and does not constitute a legal document or legal advice. Readers should consult a qualified attorney for assistance, if needed.

GREAT LAKES PASSPORT

THE GREAT LAKES BELONG TO ALL OF US

During 2019's record-high water levels, know your rights and responsibilities in Michigan when walking the beach and enjoying the water.

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THE GREAT LAKES AND THEIR SHORELINES BELONG TO ALL OF US!

Our ownership and access in Michigan is guaranteed by the *public trust doctrine*, a legal principle that establishes the government's responsibility to protect public health and the public rights in shared natural resources upon which we all depend. In Michigan, the Great Lakes, bottomlands, and shore are protected from sale, private control, or impairment for us—the public—to use and enjoy.

What activities are protected uses under the PUBLIC TRUST DOCTRINE?

💧 **ACCESS TO WATER**
(walking below the ordinary high water mark)

💧 **BOATING AND NAVIGATION**

💧 **DRINKING WATER**

💧 **FISHING**

💧 **GATHERING AND SUSTENANCE**

💧 **SWIMMING AND OTHER RECREATION**

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

💧 **Who can walk Michigan's shore?**

ALL OF US!

💧 **Where can we walk?**

In the zone between the Great Lakes water's edge and the ordinary high water mark (OHWM). The OHWM is where wave and water actions leave a distinct, natural line or mark on the shore. Michigan's Supreme Court recognized this rule in 2005 in the case of Glass v. Goeckel.

💧 **When water levels naturally fluctuate or become high, what does that mean for beach walking?**

When water levels are high, the amount of dry land available for public access may become narrow. If you are uncertain of where the OHWM is, walk in, or close to, the water in the wet sand or stony zone. Please be respectful of private shoreline property.