



Ensuring the waters of the Great Lakes Basin are healthy, public, and protected for all

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University of Michigan SEAS and Flow Water Advocates release groundwater policy report.

Traverse City and Ann Arbor, Mich. — University of Michigan's School for Environment and Sustainability (SEAS), in partnership with Flow Water Advocates, has released a new report, *A Groundwater Strategy for Michigan: Protecting the "Sixth Great Lake."* The report is the product of a 16-month initiative to examine Michigan's groundwater management and governance, and builds on the previous work of Flow and other agencies, experts, universities, and nonprofit organizations to highlight this underappreciated resource — one that is integral to the health and well-being of all Great Lakes waters.

Groundwater is often referred to as "The Sixth Great Lake" because it is equal in volume to Lake Huron. Protecting groundwater is particularly complex given limited data, fragmented state authority, misaligned policies, and a lack of public awareness. The report identifies gaps in Michigan's groundwater management; presents case studies of Antrim, Ottawa, and Washtenaw counties; and proposes a three-part strategy to advance groundwater protection.

Flow worked with SEAS graduate students to conduct scientific, technical, and data

gap analyses; a research review of nationwide groundwater policies and frameworks; and hold stakeholder interviews in the development of the report's policy recommendations.

"Flow has had the great honor and privilege to partner with the University of Michigan SEAS program to undertake this initiative and to propose an integrated groundwater strategy for the state of Michigan. This outstanding graduate student team included Lillian Wege, Kelsey Campana, Paige Lund, and Emma Welsh, and their body of work represents countless hours of research, writing, and analysis, and provides a roadmap for the next phase of our groundwater reform work here at Flow," remarked executive director, Liz Kirkwood. "In addition, we want to give special thanks to Professor Mike Shriberg, who has been a fierce groundwater champion and partner in this project."

Report co-author Lillian Wege adds, "My team and I are very excited to have had the opportunity to spend 16 months diving deep into Michigan's groundwater resources, covering topics from local and federal policies to state regulations, hydrological modeling, and community impact. We hope that our final report and factsheets will contribute to the impressive work being done to better protect this under-appreciated resource, and we are thankful to the team at Flow for hosting our work."

Flow Water Advocates' work on this report was made possible through the generous support of The Michael Cameron Dempsey Fund, The HP Foundation, The Frey Foundation, and The Oleson Foundation, whose investments directly funded this partnership. Flow Water Advocates is also deeply grateful to the additional funders whose support of our broader groundwater program helped sustain the body of work that informed this project. The report, as well as a recording of the April 8, 2026 webinar summarizing the report, is available at FlowWaterAdvocates.org/SEAS.

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Flow Water Advocates is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Traverse City, Michigan. Our mission is to ensure the waters of the Great Lakes Basin are healthy, public, and protected for all. With a staff of legal and policy experts, strategic communicators, and community builders, Flow is a trusted resource for Great Lakes advocates. We help communities, businesses,

agencies, and governments make informed policy decisions and protect public trust rights to water.
Learn more at FlowWaterAdvocates.org.