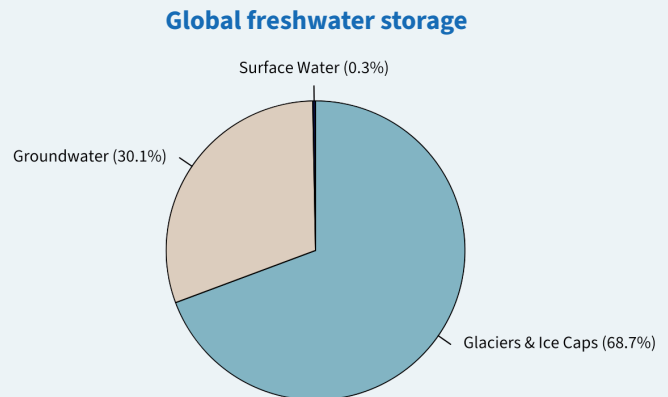


# Report Overview:

## A Groundwater Strategy for Michigan: Protecting the “Sixth Great Lake”

### Why protect groundwater?

The Great Lakes Basin holds approximately 1/5 of the world’s surface freshwater supply, positioning Michigan, which is bordered by 4 of the 5 Great Lakes, as one of the most freshwater-rich regions in the world. The state also has a groundwater volume almost the size of Lake Huron. Yet, because of its abundant surface waters, Michigan’s groundwater resources are often overlooked.



### What’s in the report?

*A Groundwater Strategy for Michigan: Protecting the “Sixth Great Lake”* looks at Michigan’s current groundwater management landscape, identifies areas for improvement, and proposes recommendations for the state legislature, regulatory agencies, and advocacy organizations to advance groundwater protection in the state. To do this, the report presents:

- An assessment of **withdrawals, contamination, and other threats** to Michigan’s groundwater.
- **Case studies** examining Michigan communities facing groundwater issues in Antrim County, Ottawa County, and Washtenaw County.
- **Policy analysis** of federal, regional, state, and local laws that impact Michigan’s groundwater.
- **Comparative policy analysis** of groundwater legislation in Arizona, California, Minnesota, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

### Key Findings

- 1** Understanding of the extent of Michigan’s groundwater resources remains limited, with aquifer **mapping and monitoring** of groundwater elevations incomplete.
- 2** Irrigation and public water supply dominate withdrawals, and expanding well drilling in the state suggests that **groundwater withdrawals will continue to increase**.
- 3** **Contamination** from various sources is likely widespread, yet testing, especially for private wells, is inconsistent.
- 4** Michigan implements indirect groundwater protection through a **patchwork of regulations** that primarily focus on surface water and public health, with federal policies providing a limited baseline.
- 5** **Useful examples for Michigan** include the specific management areas, data collection, and information sharing in other states.

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## The 3-Part Strategy

### Recommendations to the Michigan Legislature

1. Pass the **Michigan Groundwater Protection Act**, a bill package that:
  - Amends state law to **increase cleanup standards** and establish an implementation fee.
  - Creates a **Michigan Septic Code**.
  - Amends the **Michigan Zoning Enabling Act** to enhance local control.
  - Establishes a **Groundwater Coordinating Council** to enable integrated management and communication.
  - Empowers **Watershed Councils and Watershed Alliances** to include groundwater in their jurisdictions.
2. Establish the **Groundwater Protection Initiative** to issue a bond and create a **Groundwater Trust Fund**.
3. Appropriate funds from the Groundwater Trust Fund for **groundwater mapping** and a new **grant program** for local authorities.
4. Appropriate funds for **groundwater monitoring and modeling**.

### Recommendations to the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy

1. Strengthen the **Water Withdrawal Assessment Process**.
2. Add a **data-sharing** platform to the new data management systems.
3. Create a targeted **groundwater education program** with MSU Extension.

### Recommendations to advocacy organizations

1. Support the passage of the **Michigan Groundwater Protection Act**.
2. Create and support **educational initiatives** about groundwater.
3. Identify **additional funding sources** for groundwater protection.
4. Lead campaigns to support state-level **groundwater protection funding**.



See the full report