

Groundwater Policies in Comparative States

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

How do these states manage groundwater?



- Passed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act in 2014.
- Manages groundwater quantity and quality and identifies the connection between surface water and groundwater.
- Mandates regional groundwater sustainability plans with ongoing review and revision to offer flexibility.

- Passed the Groundwater Protection Act in 1989 to protect groundwater quality and quantity.
- Coordinates groundwater protection across regulatory agencies with information sharing and collaboration.
- Designates sensitive areas based on vulnerability to water quality threats.



- Passed the Groundwater Management Act in 1992 to amend a 1973 law.
- Established a groundwater permitting system that considers conjunctive use.
- Monitoring well framework and coordination with external agencies like the USGS illustrate the importance of tracking resource status.

- Passed the Comprehensive Groundwater Protection Act in 1983.
- Prevents groundwater pollution through a two-tiered, multi-agency regulatory approach.
- Fosters broad policy popularity by offering flexible initial regulation along with firm “prevention action limits.”



- Passed the Groundwater Management Act in 1980.
- Designated Active Management Areas and Irrigation Non-Expansion Areas.
- Active Management Areas and Irrigation Non-Expansion Areas enable regional groundwater management and spatially defined priorities.
- Strong emphasis on protecting groundwater for agricultural and drinking water purposes.

Lessons for Michigan

Expand statewide data collection

Broaden groundwater modeling and mapping

Produce publicly accessible status reports

Strengthen adaptability through clearly defined regions

Invest in monitoring well networks

Lessons from Groundwater Policy in Other States

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Comparative Policy Matrix

Policy Mechanism	Michigan	Arizona	California	Minnesota	Wisconsin	Virginia
Statutory groundwater management policy	0	2	2	2	2	2
Groundwater resource status reports or documents are consistently developed and publically available	0	2	2	2	2	1
Geological mapping of current groundwater resources and hydrologic flows	1	1	2	2	2	2
Groundwater well data is publicly available through a database	1	2	2	2	2	1
Multi-tiered enforcement of groundwater management with voluntary and involuntary mechanisms	1	1	1	2	2	0
Management decisions are made by legislatively mandated management areas within the state	1	2	2	2	1	2
Quantity and quality of groundwater resources are jointly managed	0	1	2	1	2	0
Regulatory agencies coordinate groundwater management	1	1	1	1	2	1
Stakeholders are incorporated in groundwater decision-making processes	1	2	2	1	1	1
Comprehensive groundwater data are collected through the presence of a monitoring well network	1	2	2	2	2	2
Models track groundwater resources and inform management decisions	2	1	2	2	1	2
Consistent and accessible communication between the public and regulatory agencies	1	1	2	1	2	1
Local-level groundwater management plans	0	2	2	1	1	1
Comprehensive funding for groundwater management	0	1	1	1	1	1
Groundwater pumping fees disincentivize overwithdrawal of resources	0	1	1	1	0	0
Aquifers or basins ranked by importance or level of concern	0	1	2	1	0	0
Total	10	23	38	24	23	17

