

Summary of Written Comments Received on Draft Water Strategy

The OGL released the Draft Water Strategy for public review on June 9, 2015 and invited public comment period through August 28, 2015. The OGL received over 750 comments from over 150 groups or individuals, including private citizens, nongovernmental organizations, industry, state, local and regional governments, tribal governments, elected officials, academia, and others. The comments were considered by the OGL and agency steering committee as further revisions to the Water Strategy were made. After carefully reviewing the comments, the OGL cataloged received comments, divided them into broad or detailed comments, identified comments that needed further attention, and assigned comments to the appropriate state agency to be reviewed, considered, and addressed as appropriate.

Written comments focused on several themes, including:

- **Funding and fees:** Several public comments noted the need for continued and additional funding to meet the Water Strategy's goals, especially at the local level.
- **Infrastructure:** Many comments were concerned with the current state of Michigan's water infrastructure. Several comments called for increased funding.
- **Water Affordability:** Several comments touched on the idea water provided by public utilities must be affordable, especially in communities where individuals might not have the ability to pay full price. Some referred to it as a basic human right.
- **Government Collaboration:** Many comments addressed the idea that because water in the Great Lakes is shared between many different governing bodies, government collaboration is key to successful implementation of the Water Strategy. Many comments focused on working with (and funding) local governments during the implementation phase.
- **Implementation Metrics:** Some comments were directed at the Water Strategy's implementation metrics.
- **Education and Stewardship:** Improving water literacy and building Michigan's water ethic through education was mentioned in many comments. Suggestions ranged from including water management education in K-12 schools and educating the public on water programs, to educating the public on how to protect Michigan's water resources.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Several comments noted that the strategy should further describe and address the role of stakeholder engagement as part of the strategy's implementation.
- **Program Implementation:** The OGL received several comments about how the water strategy would be implemented.

- Document Structure: The OGL received many constructive comments suggesting changes to how the document was put together—from broad comments about the flow of chapters to specific comments on metrics, word choice, and content. These comments were helpful as the OGL fine-tuned Water Strategy.

The interagency steering committee carefully reviewed each comment received on the draft Water Strategy and to the best of its ability tried to address the comments in the final Water Strategy. Revisions were made to address gaps in the document; improve formatting and structure; provide clarity to the content, recommendations, metrics and measures of success; and improve overall readability of the document. A summary of how comments were addressed by the steering committee is below.

- The Water Strategy calls for the creation of a strategic water fund to support implementation of the strategy and funding for water infrastructure improvements. The 21st Century Infrastructure Commission appointed by Governor Snyder in Executive Order (insert number) will be developing a strategy to address water infrastructure needs in Michigan including funding.
- The Water Strategy currently recommends that communities and utilities assess their water affordability programs and rate structures to ensure access to water for drinking and sanitation for financially distressed customers.
- Revisions were made to the strategy to emphasize the importance of government collaboration across the region with other states, provinces, tribal governments and clarify roles in implementation.
- Revisions were made to clarify implementation metrics and measures of success.
- Revisions were made to strengthen the stewardship chapter and broaden the chapter beyond K-12 education to include programs implemented by nongovernmental organizations, conservation organizations, private institutions, etc.
- Additional revisions were made to describe and emphasize the important role of stakeholder engagement in implementation of the strategy including additional recommendations and lead actors.
- Revisions were made to clarify a champion for implementation of the Water Strategy. The OGL is forming an interdepartmental water team that will develop a process for stakeholder and tribal engagement to support collaboration, implementation, and evaluation of progress.