

# Water WoRDs

## *Updates from the Water Resources Division*



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### **2014 Integrated Report**

We are all well aware of predictable cycles in nature: the warming and cooling that changing seasons bring, spring and fall bird migrations, salmon running upstream to spawn; cycles also happen in the world of water quality reporting. Every two years states and Indian tribes are required to report on the condition of waters (lakes, streams, wetlands, etc.) within their borders to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). This reporting is a requirement of the 1972 Clean Water Act, specifically Sections 303(d), 305(b), and 314. This report in Michigan is titled, "Water Quality and Pollution Control in Michigan 2014 Sections 303(d), 305(b), and 314 Integrated Report," or, more simply, the Integrated Report. The DRAFT 2014 Integrated Report is currently open for public review and comment through January 10, 2014, and can be found at this link: <http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,4561,7-135-3313-12711--,00.html>.

If one were to print the written report, at just over 110 pages, along with its associated appendices which, arguably, contain the most interesting information, the document would be over 3,600 pages long! Even the most ardent supporter of water quality monitoring and protection would find digesting this information, in a printed format, untenable. So, what does it all mean, and how does it become useful to both the citizens of Michigan and the agencies charged with protecting the state's resources?



The report itself steps through the kinds of water quality protection programs that the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), primarily the Water Resources Division, administers. It also discusses the kinds of data used to assess water quality, the methods by which those assessments are made, and offers some broad discussion of the results for this 2014 cycle including waters that have been identified as having problems and in need of additional attention.

If, however, you are particularly interested in the condition of your favorite stream, beach, or lake, the appendices are where we have identified the specifics. Michigan is blessed with an extensive amount of water and, while there are certainly still places for which we have little or no data, thanks to the many facets of our monitoring programs and those of our partners we can boast significant coverage of our aquatic resources.

It is helpful to understand that all waters in Michigan are protected for a number of “designated uses;” things like fish consumption, agricultural use, industrial water supply, navigation, partial body contact recreation, warmwater fishery (and coldwater fishery, where appropriate), and other indigenous aquatic life and wildlife, among others. If data are available, each one of these uses is assessed for its respective lake, beach, stream, or river. Appendix B, in particular, has designated use-level specifics broken down as either “Not Assessed” (i.e., data not available), “Fully Supporting” (i.e., based on available data, it looks good), or “Not Supporting” (i.e., a problem is identified and additional work is needed). While the desire is to have all waters show up as “Fully Supporting,” this Integrated Report process is aimed at identifying those waters that are “Not Supporting” and needing extra attention. If available and appropriate, these waters will also have information on what the cause of the problem is, and when we will develop (or have developed) the official ‘plan’ to address a road to recovery (called a “TMDL” – Total Maximum Daily Load); more on this process can be found in Chapter 9 of the Integrated Report.

Following the receipt of comments from the public and the USEPA, the final 2014 Integrated Report will be submitted to the USEPA and released on our Web site by April 1, 2014. After that release, we plan on offering a Webinar to help explain some of the big-picture results from the report, including how others can get to the information in the hopes that this sizeable document, and sizeable effort by DEQ staff and its partners can become increasingly understandable and useful. And, if you miss the opportunity to comment this time, have no fear – the 2016 reporting cycle is just around the corner...

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### What do you do in the WRD? Meet Kevin Goodwin

Kevin Goodwin has been an Aquatic Biologist for the Surface Water Assessment Section of the Water Resources Division for over 14 years. Kevin has a B.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology from UMASS Amherst and an M.S. in Fisheries Science from Virginia Tech. He spends his time monitoring water quality primarily in the AuSable, Clinton, and Rouge watersheds using the DEQ's rapid assessment procedures to look at stream insects, fish, and habitat conditions. He has also been monitoring Michigan's Lake Erie shoreline for the past two years to understand beach conditions related to algae and 'muck.' Among other things, Kevin also coordinates the DEQ's biennial reporting of statewide water quality to the USEPA through the Sections 303(d), 305(b), and 314 Integrated Reporting process.

