

## **Water Use Advisory Council (WUAC) Meeting**

Hosted by the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE)

**Tuesday, April 8, 2025**

**1:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m.**

Lee Walker Conference Room, North Atrium, Constitution Hall  
525 West Allegan, Lansing, MI 48933

Remote Option Available Via Teams

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### **Meeting Minutes**

#### **1. Welcome**

Laura Campbell greeted the committee. Quorum was held.

#### **2. Roll Call**

Laura Campbell conducted roll call around the room and confirmed online roll call.

#### **WUAC Members In-Person**

Laura Campbell, Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB)

Adam Wygant, EGLE

Dave Maturen, Michigan Lakes and Streams Association (MLSA)

Josh Scramlin, Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB)

Michael Frederick, Michigan Ground Water Association

Doug Needham, Michigan Aggregate Association

Pat Staskiewicz, Michigan American Water Works Association

Rachel Proctor, Consumers Energy

Dave Hamilton, TNC

Megan Napier, AKT Peerless

Megan Tinsley, Michigan Environmental Council

Tom Zimmicki, Alliance of the Great Lakes

Richard Norton, University of Michigan

Jay Eccleston, The Emerald

Sara Pearson, MGS

Bryan Burroughs, Trout Unlimited

**WUAC Members Virtual**

Katy Lindstrom, Barr Engineering

Abigail Eaton, MDARD

Kelly Turner, Michigan Potato Industry Commission (MPIC)

Steve Kohler, Kalamazoo River Watershed Council

**WUAC Members Not In-Attendance**

Jason Walther

Rex Vaughn, MLSA; serving as Dave Maturen's alternate

Michael Eliis, Barr Engineering

Kyle Rorah, Wetlands Conservation

Frank Ettawageshik, United Tribes of Michigan

Elizabeth Morrissette, Attorney General

**WUAC Non-Members**

Lena Pappas, EGLE GRMD

Briana Hammontree, JetCo

Jim Milne, EGLE

Melissa Grasman, JetCo

Sydney Ruhala, EGLE GRMD

Megan Cameron, EGLE GRMD

Hannah Arnett, EGLE

Andy LeBaron, EGLE

Garrett Link, EGLE

Michael Jugle, EGLE

Tariku Negassa, EGLE

Amira Nejadhashemi

Trisha Hagerman, EGLE

Robert Goodwin, MSU

Jeremiah Asher, MSU

Simon Belisle, EGLE

Katie Mika, EGLE

John Yellich

Dave Lusch

Amie Baelstrom

Jill Van Dyke, EGLE

Joanne Wisley

Marian Maier, EGLE

Joel Henry, Environmental Consulting & Technology, Inc. (ECT)

Emily Finnell, EGLE

Howard Reeves, USGS

### **3. Approval of Minutes-Roll Call Vote Discussion**

Laura Campbell requested any edits from February's meeting. No requests for edits were noted.

Meeting minutes approved.

### **4. Approval of Agenda-Roll Call Vote Discussion**

Laura Campbell requests for any changes or additions to the agenda today.

Laura noted the request was sent out via email.

Bryan Burroughs enters late, introduces himself.

Tom Zimnicki noted he is not on the distribution list; Melissa will meet with Tom after the meeting to obtain his information.

Agenda approved.

### **5. Public Comment (Three Minute Limit)**

No public comment.

### **6. Committee Chairs Report**

#### **a. Data Collection Committee**

Bryan Burroughs noted that a meeting scheduler was sent out in April by Megan for an initial meeting at the end of April, with plans to schedule another in May. If anyone did not receive the invitation, they should contact Bryan directly.

The upcoming meetings will cover a range of topics, including:

- Long-term data planning project
- Inland Lakes project
- Adverse resource impact (ARI) project
- Updates on other relevant projects

Additionally, time will be allocated to hear from committee members regarding any new or emerging topics the committee should consider addressing this year either for discussion or to develop formal recommendations. Bryan concluded by stating that further updates would be shared at the meeting.

#### **b. Conservation and Efficiency Committee**

Emily Finnell provided an update on the Conservation and Efficiency Committee, which recently held a meeting. The committee has shifted from monthly to bimonthly meetings after several years of meeting more frequently. She noted several key project updates, including the Alliance for Water Efficiency project, which was originally initiated in 2020 as one of the council's recommendations in the biennial legislative report. That project is nearing the completion of its draft final report. The project team previously presented their initial findings and stakeholder feedback during the February committee meeting and is scheduled to return in June to present an updated

draft. Following the presentation, committee members will participate in reviewing the draft report and providing input.

Emily also shared updates on other committee initiatives. A new website is being developed, and an outline is being created with input from Jim, Lena, and their respective teams. In addition, the committee is working to schedule a presentation by Dr. Andresen, who has been delivering talks on climate and water trends over the past 20 years with projections looking 50 years into the future. The committee hopes to include him in a future meeting and will notify the Council when that is confirmed, as the session will be recorded. These efforts are part of a broader engagement with national researchers who are examining climate, agriculture, and water trends through 2050. Emily also touched on the Water User Committee's draft final report, which is currently under internal review by the Office of the Great Lakes and the Water Use Assessment Unit. The team is compiling comments for the project team to incorporate, with a final version expected by early summer. Due to a busy spring, no progress has been made on the Water User Committee guidebook since the last meeting, but an update will be provided at the next Council meeting in June. She also encouraged further outreach support for the Ag Efficiency Pilot, especially in coordination with county farm bureaus, to ensure that farmers in key areas are aware of and able to participate in the program.

### **c. Implementation Committee**

Doug Needham provided a progress update on the implementation of Council recommendations from the 2020, 2022, and 2024 reports. He shared that all action items from the 2020 report are either completed or well underway, and every item from the 2022 report is currently in progress. Encouragingly, nothing from these reports is sitting idle. Doug added that some items from the 2024 report are already being discussed, even though funding has not yet been secured. Fortunately, a few of the 2024 items do not require funding and are moving forward regardless.

Doug emphasized that the projects which have received funding are progressing in a positive direction, and that this reflects well on the Council's ability to act on its recommendations, in collaboration with the Quality-of-Life agencies. Attendees were provided with a copy of the project tracking spreadsheet at the meeting, and an electronic version was also sent out via email. Members were encouraged to review it and provide updates as project milestones are met or statuses change so the tracking can remain current. While EGLE is working on a cleaner version of the spreadsheet for easier management and reporting, the existing document will continue to be used until the updated version is ready. Doug also noted the importance of having clear documentation when approaching the legislature for funding, as the

spreadsheet serves as tangible evidence of progress. The update concluded with thanks to Doug for maintaining the tracking system, and no questions were raised.

**d. Models Committee**

Dave Hamilton gave an overview of recent activity within the Models Committee, noting that several topics are currently in motion. He began by highlighting that the aquifer transmissivity and storage coefficient project is now underway. A contractor has been secured, consisting of Fishbeck and Michigan State University (MSU) in a joint effort, with Anthony Kendall leading the work on the MSU side. Dave Lusch is heading the internal workgroup, and the team is just beginning its efforts with expectations of meaningful results over time.

Dave explained that while the full Models Committee meets occasionally, most progress is driven by smaller workgroups, which take on the detailed development work and report out major updates. One such update relates to an item first identified in the 2020 Council reporting the development of the Michigan Hydrologic Framework and the Michigan Integrated Water Management Database. Originally two separate projects, these have since been merged for operational efficiency and are being developed as one integrated effort. Jeremiah Asher from MSU is leading development of the Hydrologic Framework, while Bob Goodwin is working on the Water Management Database. Dave emphasized that while the database will directly support the framework, it is also being structured to integrate with broader departmental efforts at the State of Michigan to centralize water management data.

The framework is being designed as a key resource for modeling and data sharing across the state and is part of a larger initiative to align model development tools with state needs. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is also involved, developing hydrologic models and advising on model integration. Updates from both MSU and USGS were included on the meeting agenda. Dave concluded his remarks by inviting council members to ask questions after each presentation rather than waiting until the end.

**e. Michigan Hydrologic Framework**

Jeremiah Asher provided a detailed overview of the development and status of the Michigan Hydrologic Framework tool. To begin with, they explained that an advisory team and stakeholder group were formed early in the process to provide guidance and feedback. The project kicked off with a user needs assessment using a whiteboard-style approach, where sticky notes were used to capture key insights, such as identifying the tool's primary audiences,

defining system needs and goals, outlining desired functionality, and mapping out potential workflows and use cases. This method allowed for quick iterations and feedback without requiring any backend development at that stage. Once a layout was refined based on team input, the project moved into graphic design and coding.

Jeremiah then shared that the current homepage of the framework includes the ability to search for data and models, upload models, and utilize a mapping visualization interface. The team has worked closely with DTMB to ensure the system is Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant and adheres to the State of Michigan's style guide, as the final platform is intended to be hosted by the state.

In terms of functionality, the model upload process is already in place. Users can fill out a form that includes metadata fields such as model name, year, type, version, and a summary, and upload model files in a zipped format. Once uploaded, the system will unpack the files, extract and process the data, and provide confirmation to the user. The team is still finalizing how review and approval of submitted models will be handled—particularly whether a designated reviewer at the state level will need to approve models before they are published.

The mapping interface was also demonstrated. It allows users to search for and explore models by clicking on geographic locations or drawing a bounding box on the map. Selecting a model displays its associated metadata, and if it has been published externally, a link will be available for further access.

Additionally, a 3D visualization tool has been developed as part of the framework. When a model is uploaded, the system can generate visual layers such as hydraulic head and conductivity, which users can then explore in three dimensions. Users can manipulate the view by adjusting vertical exaggeration and offset values to get a better sense of the underlying data structure.

Currently, the Tri-County model from USGS is being used to test the new system features. Additional USGS models are expected to be integrated into the framework as they become available. Jeremiah Asher concluded by noting that the primary focus has been on building out these core components, and that development is progressing steadily.

During the discussion, Bryan Burroughs emphasized that some individuals may possess new data that others do not, underscoring the need for careful

tracking of data sources. Bryan added that some data may come from older versions of database downloads, which can introduce inconsistencies based on the timing and method of extraction. He noted that individual choices made during data modeling—such as selection criteria or applied multipliers—can affect the outcomes and interpretations. They discussed the sensitivity involved in uploading such modeled data back into a shared database, agreeing that this is a critical point where verification is essential to ensure the data's integrity and usability by others.

Pat Staskiewicz asked for any remaining questions. None noted. Thanked Jeremiah Asher for the update.

**f. Michigan Integrated Water Management Database**

Robert (“Bob”) Goodwin presented an update on the development of the Integrated Water Management Database, which is now being developed in conjunction with the Michigan Hydrologic Framework (MHF). He began by explaining the original vision of the project, which was to create a standalone database where all relevant datasets—federal, state, and others—could be gathered into a centralized location. However, that initial model became less viable over time, especially post-COVID. The approach of duplicating data in a central repository raised concerns, particularly about data redundancy and confusion over which dataset is considered the authoritative source. Additionally, Bob noted that the State of Michigan discourages duplicative data storage, preferring a more streamlined approach.

As the project evolved, the goal shifted away from centralization and more toward a coordinated system that accesses data where it already resides. Much of the current work has focused on building the right framework to enable that access. As a result, Bob acknowledged that the project name “Integrated Water Management Database” is now somewhat of a misnomer, as the system is not technically a standalone database but a processing and integration platform.

Next steps for the project include finalizing server-side processing and storage components, completing Python scripts in coordination with the Institute of Water Research (IWR), and integrating those scripts into the MHF web application. This development follows a sequential process, prioritizing the stability and reliability of data processing routines before exploring open-source and out-of-the-box options. Bob stressed that the team wants to avoid developing a system that would require constant updates or maintenance due to external changes, such as when third parties move or rename their hosted datasets. To manage this, the system relies on configuration files that will

need regular documentation and maintenance to ensure data pathways remain functional.

Bob asked for any questions after the presentation. Laura Campbell asked a question regarding the handling and care of proprietary data.

He clarified that all data used on his side of the project is publicly available data. While users could incorporate their own higher-resolution or localized data for personal use such as higher-quality flowline data for a specific county, those datasets would not be uploaded back into the system or shared through the platform. Bob concluded by reiterating the importance of thoughtful data management and acknowledged, with humor, the shared frustrations around post-retirement access to GIS tools. Dave Hamilton agreed.

No further questions were raised following the discussion.

Bryan Burroughs expressed appreciation, noting that the work being discussed is valuable and costly, as they pay for it. He thanked the participants and reflected on the longevity of these conversations, mentioning that some of the topics had been in discussion since as early as 2000 or 2019. Hearing the depth of current engagement in these issues, he shared that it was deeply satisfying to witness the progress and continued focus on these longstanding efforts.

**g. USGS Modeling**

Dave Hamilton introduced Howard to provide the last update from the Models Committee.

Howard Reeves provided an in-depth update on their work with the Institute of Water Research (IWR) on the Michigan Hydrologic Framework (MHF). Four major tasks are currently underway. The first, mentioned earlier by Jeremiah Asher, involves working with hydrologic models. One model is under development for the tri-state area near Lake Erie and is expected to be completed soon. USGS is also working with existing models provided by EGLE and IWR, using them as test cases to integrate into the new hydrologic framework. These efforts include fielding questions about popular models such as MODFLOW, which is a widely used groundwater flow model available in multiple versions.

A key tool being applied in this work is the Soil Water Balance (SWB) code, which uses a water budget approach to estimate recharge on a cell-by-cell basis, calculated on a daily time step. The study period spans from 1995 to

2020. The model incorporates climate data—specifically temperature and precipitations sourced from nationally available datasets, such as Daymet and GridMET. For each cell, the model tracks precipitation, evapotranspiration (ET), runoff, and infiltration into the root zone. A set of lookup tables, based on land cover, crop type, and time of year, estimates transformation rates and water movement. While daily recharge estimates are less reliable due to natural lag between the root zone and groundwater, aggregated values at monthly, seasonal, and annual intervals become more accurate and useful.

Noted the model includes complex hydrologic processes such as frozen ground conditions that inhibit infiltration in winter months and simulated irrigation application based on soil moisture deficits. The Thornapple Watershed was selected as the test case for this modeling effort due to the availability of an AmeriFlux tower, which provides real-world measurements of evapotranspiration. The team first tested the sensitivity of the model by varying parameters within the lookup tables to observe how results changed. These outputs were compared against long-term average recharge values, baseflow measurements, and flux estimates from AmeriFlux towers. Early results showed some overestimation in ET, but the model is still being tuned.

Noted to refine results, the team is applying a process known as history matching, where observed values (like ET and baseflow) are used to adjust and fine-tune model parameters for better accuracy over time. The goal is to collapse variability in the results and improve confidence in model outputs.

USGS is also exploring the use of meta-modeling techniques to improve speed and efficiency. This involves running the numerical model thousands of times such as placing a pumping well in every grid cell to build a library of inputs and corresponding system responses. These datasets can then be used to train statistical models like random forests or boosted regression trees. Noted the aim is to provide near-instantaneous, reliable results through a future version of the screening tool, which would flag areas requiring further review. The meta-model would act as a middle ground between high-level screening and full site-specific analysis.

Laura Campbell acknowledged frustrations with the streamflow depletion tool, noting that many users, particularly farmers, view it as a mysterious "black box" that can yield different results than the online version. She emphasized that phasing out the streamflow depletion tool in favor of a unified version for all users represents a major step forward for transparency and program credibility. Laura commended the team for this improvement, calling it a significant achievement. She then raised technical questions about data

inputs used for evapotranspiration (ET) calculations and recharge modeling, asking whether highly specific datasets such as USDA soil type maps and the crop data layer are being incorporated to distinguish between crops like corn, soybeans, or potatoes, and whether the system accounts for crop rotations from year to year.

Howard Reeves noted the model is not that specific. It was clarified that the model uses the National Land Cover Database (NLCD) and USDA soil grids but does not currently distinguish between specific crop types or rotation patterns on an annual basis. Regarding transparency and data use, it was confirmed that the tools developed by USGS will be publicly available once completed, ensuring consistency across users and eliminating the use of the outdated and often-criticized “batch tool.”

Laura Campbell noted question that users are more accustomed to running multiple models using the same dataset adjusting variables such as different wells to determine the best fit and understand the source of outcomes. She asked whether this type of comparative modeling would be part of the project or if the focus would be on selecting a single model and running it repeatedly to streamline the process, particularly in aligning results between tools like the screening tool and the Site Scenario Viewer. She followed up by noting that, for the purposes of meta-modeling, the current approach seems to favor using a single model to emulate and improve processing speed.

Howard Reeves responded to a question about model selection within the meta-modeling effort by confirming that the current plan focuses on emulating a single model to improve processing speed. However, he acknowledged the value in exploring multiple models to understand the range of potential outcomes, particularly within the context of the Michigan Hydrologic Framework (MHF). Howard noted that in regulatory settings, this approach raises open questions, especially when several validated models exist for a given area. He explained that regulators and stakeholders may receive slightly different results from each model, prompting the dilemma of whether to select one model, average results, or adopt another strategy. If one model appears as an outlier, it might be dismissed, but when models yield similar results, a more nuanced analysis may be needed. Howard suggested either digging into the differences to identify the most appropriate assumptions and “pick a winner,” or retaining all models and using an averaging or discrimination technique to interpret the results.

Dave Hamilton explained that the concept behind the meta-modeling effort was based on leveraging detailed modeling already conducted by EGLE. If EGLE determines that a particular model is well-suited for a specific area and

uses it for regulatory determinations, the idea is to translate that trusted model's output into the screening tool. This approach would allow the screening tool to reflect models EGLE has confidence in, effectively jumpstarting the meta-modeling process. As a result, users wouldn't need to run full site-specific models for initial evaluations they could rely on the screening tool's outputs, which are grounded in vetted, high-confidence models.

Laura Campbell clarified that this approach has the potential to reduce the number of site-specific reviews by enabling the screening tool to provide more accurate results. By integrating trusted, area-specific models into the screening tool through meta-modeling, users can receive reliable assessments earlier in the process, minimizing the need for detailed individual site reviews.

Howard Reeves added that this streamlined approach would be especially beneficial in areas where results are borderline and typically trigger a high volume of site-specific reviews. If the outcome is predictable where users would end up running the model regardless the screening tool could handle those cases upfront. This would reduce EGLE's workload, allowing staff to focus their efforts on sites that genuinely require deeper investigation.

Laura Campbell inquired whether users would have the ability to experiment with different characteristics as test runs, or if this feature would be restricted to internal staff only. He noted that most people might not be concerned with this level of customization. She specifically mentioned that consultants or technologists such as those working with USGS would likely be interested in this capability. If such a feature were available, he suggested that it could be published for broader use.

Howard Reeves noted if USGS does it, they will publish it. Noted no reason to see why it wouldn't be open.

Pat Staskiewicz noted any questions. A question was noted on brief mention of breach charge, followed by a reference to history matching. It was asked for an explanation of what history matching entails and how it would help tighten up the dispersion in the model.

Howard Reeves the process involves using observations of base flow from a 25-year period along with evapotranspiration (ET) data from towers. The model can then run calculations for this time period and attempt to match both the ET and base flow data. The goal is to fine-tune the parameters of a lookup table to best align with these observations, adjusting the model year

by year. It was noted that as the tables are static, the adjustments made should enable the model to better match the data over time.

Laura Campbell noted question regarding where MSU gets its ET data.

Howard Reeves noted their data is calculated using data from weather stations, including inputs such as wind speed and solar radiation. These inputs are then run through an equation to estimate ET values.

Pat Staskiewicz thanked all presenters for their reports.

Dave Hamilton wrapped up the Model's Committee update. Mentioned that a report from 2016 had recommended the funding and implementation of this project, with the Council endorsing it for rollout in 2020. Now, in 2025, there is satisfaction in seeing the progress and the quality of work being done. The team was commended for their excellent efforts, with the tool being described as a magnificent resource. It was also noted that the project is on track to be completed within the allotted timeframe.

**d. Legislative Report Recommendations Outreach Plan (1:28)**

During the meeting, Bryan Burroughs emphasized the group's statutory responsibility to provide recommendations to improve the program, primarily through a biennial report. However, he acknowledged that while this report fulfills legal obligations, it may not serve as an effective outreach tool in today's fast-paced environment. Bryan highlighted ongoing challenges in ensuring their recommendations reach and resonate with the intended audiences, noting that external events—such as the COVID-19 pandemic and fluctuating budget projections—have contributed to delays and limited visibility. He pointed out that moments of increased legislative interest, such as concerns over data center water use, have occasionally opened the door for productive conversations. Despite completing the 2024 report in December, it was not included in the Governor's executive budget, raising questions about whether this was due to timing, communication gaps, or other factors. As the House and Senate enter budget season, Burroughs stressed the importance of refining outreach strategies to clearly communicate the group's recommendations—not to persuade decision-makers of priorities, but to ensure understanding. He concluded that outreach and messaging should remain an ongoing topic of discussion.

Dave Maturen addressed the challenges associated with the current process for securing funding, emphasizing that reliance on individual relationships within the legislature should not be the standard approach. He noted that

during a recent Senate hearing on EGLE's budget, the Advisory Council was not mentioned, despite its alignment with agency initiatives. Dave observed that the Council's efforts often proceed without formal acknowledgment, which can hinder progress. He cited a previous instance in which project funding was secured through available surplus and timely engagement with key appropriations committee members, while also recognizing the limitations of this approach for long-term planning. As the 2024 budget cycle progresses and emerging issues such as groundwater persist, Dave underscored the importance of establishing a more systematic and proactive engagement strategy. He remarked that while reports are an important communication tool, they are not always sufficient on their own to drive legislative attention. Given the trend toward one-time appropriations that require annual justification, he recommended exploring more consistent methods for conveying the Council's priorities and ensuring their consideration in the budget process.

Laura Campbell highlighted the need to distinguish between two categories of funding requests: those related to new initiatives proposed through the biennial report, and those required to sustain previously funded, ongoing projects. She pointed out that while a \$1.2 million request may seem substantial, it represents a small portion of the overall state budget. Additionally, there are recurring annual costs—approximately \$750,000—for EGLE's ongoing activities, such as equipment, monitoring, and related operations, as well as \$3 million annually to support the Michigan Geological Survey. Laura suggested that it would be more efficient and logical for such continuing expenses to be built into EGLE's core budget, rather than being treated as new funding each year. While new funding requests may be pursued through legislative outreach if they are not incorporated into EGLE's budget, she acknowledged the complexity of advocacy efforts, particularly when organizational restrictions vary. Some stakeholders are limited in their ability to engage in lobbying, while others are not, making unified messaging a challenge. Campbell concluded by emphasizing the importance of developing a more strategic and effective approach to communicating with legislators and ensuring that priority items are clearly reflected in the final state budget.

Tom Zimnicki acknowledged that while some organizations may be limited in their ability to lobby, there are still meaningful opportunities to engage in education and outreach. He welcomed Dave Maturen, recognizing his recent return, and asked about the broader legislative strategy—specifically, who is currently leading coordination efforts related to funding requests and project advocacy. Tom noted that it appears he may be stepping into that role.

He highlighted the importance of pairing specific funding requests with broader educational initiatives focused on groundwater and water resource management. While advocating for individual projects is important, Tom emphasized the need to ensure legislators understand the ongoing value of the Council's work and the importance of consistent data oversight, planning, and long-term groundwater strategy.

Using the Michigan Hydrologic Framework as an example, he noted that while the tool itself is highly valuable and well-presented, legislators are unlikely to absorb the full technical detail. Therefore, it becomes crucial to communicate the broader significance and practical value of such tools in a clear and accessible manner. Tom suggested that current initiatives present an opportunity to strengthen both targeted legislative asks and broader educational outreach. He offered to support the development of a more coordinated approach to these efforts moving forward.

Dave Hamilton stressed about the status of a project this year, referencing discussions from the previous fall regarding depletion and the large-scale study designed to monitor and model streams more effectively. He emphasized the importance of the study, noting its potential value in streamlining processes and improving understanding.

Dave Hamilton pointed out that if funding is secured, the project would begin in October. However, if funding is not allocated this year, the project will be delayed, similar to previous projects. He expressed concern about the potential delays, particularly given the importance of this specific project, which he believes could have a significant impact.

Pat Staskiewicz raised a point about the legislative process and the tendency of legislators to rely on established routines. He noted that non-annual requests can be more difficult to sell and suggested that perhaps the Council should adopt an annual request cycle. He expressed uncertainty, acknowledging his lack of experience with lobbying, but proposed that having a regular, annual presence could be more effective.

By approaching legislators every year with updates on ongoing work, the Council could provide a consistent value proposition, even when no new funds are requested. Staskiewicz suggested that this approach could involve presenting annual updates on the status of projects, highlighting progress, and reinforcing ongoing needs, with the understanding that new asks would be reserved for biennial reports.

Tom Zimnicki acknowledged the significance of Staskiewicz's suggestion, recognizing its potential to maintain ongoing conversations with legislators. He emphasized that regular updates could help address constituents' concerns across a variety of issues. He also posed a question about whether it would be beneficial to shape feedback from legislators and their constituents, noting that individual projects often generate substantial interest and could be a way to keep engagement active.

Bryan Burroughs shared a perspective based on his experiences since 2007, noting that it was once common for co-chairs to provide detailed updates in front of Senate committees. However, he observed that this practice had become less frequent over time, with the last major legislative presentation occurring years ago. Burroughs acknowledged that reports sent out may not be fully read by all stakeholders but emphasized the need for continued engagement and the importance of requesting presentations when necessary. He also reflected on past efforts, recalling how presentations sometimes faded into obscurity.

Bryan Burroughs suggested that a more concise approach could be beneficial, where key points are summarized, perhaps in one or two minutes with accompanying visuals. He also raised the point that financial needs that recur annually could become established as line items in the budget, providing more consistency. However, he noted that even with established needs, the annual nature of budgeting sometimes leads to challenges in maintaining continuity from year to year.

Laura Campbell raised the question of how the ongoing expenses and new budgetary asks can be effectively incorporated into EGLE's budget. She suggested that it may be beneficial to form an ad hoc workgroup to coordinate the efforts between this body and EGLE. Specifically, she proposed that an annual report could be used to highlight the previous year's new funding requests, while also addressing the ongoing expenses necessary to maintain existing projects. She asked for feedback on whether this approach would be useful and encouraged others to think through how best to align these financial discussions for future planning.

Adam Wygant agreed that creating an ad hoc group to address the timing mismatch between the proposal submission process and the governor's budgetary priorities would be a good approach. He highlighted that while the department's process isn't intentional, the timing mismatch between proposals and the final report delivery often causes difficulties. He noted that proposals for changes to the governor's budget for FY26, for instance, were already in the works last summer. Adam acknowledged that there might be

some misalignment and indicated that he had been working with Sydney and Travis on their end to find ways to address these timing challenges. He expressed that forming an ad hoc group to specifically focus on synchronizing these efforts would be beneficial.

Laura Campbell clarified that the report is required to be produced by December 28th. However, she noted that there's flexibility in the release date. She suggested that if it would benefit the budget process, they could consider adjusting the Water Use Advisory Council's reporting schedule to a biannual cycle, shifting the release from December to June. Laura emphasized that this change would not be problematic and that the current December timing was simply carried over from the original two-year cycle.

Adam Wygant noted other potential solutions are on the table to overcome it.

Emily Finnell agreed that there has been a disconnect in recent years and highlighted that this is the first time the Council has received funding for its work, along with significant resources to support the Water Use Assessment Unit. She emphasized that the current timing presents an opportunity to have an ad hoc discussion to address these challenges.

Emily pointed out that operational maintenance costs, which are essential for sustaining programs, require different considerations than project funding. She also noted that the cycle for preparing budget requests and submitting them to the governor is not well-aligned with the timing of legislative reports. Emily suggested having a discussion with legislative staff to explore how the Council can engage with the legislature on an annual basis for educational purposes. This would help address the need for ongoing education and advocacy, which has not been consistently addressed in the past.

Adam Wygant acknowledged the frustration of the situation, noting that the department goes before the Senate, gets approval, but the work of the committee isn't always discussed. He understood the challenges involved. Adam also mentioned that the narrative they are currently working with is quite structured, and at this point, he was ready to address the issue. He is committed to working with Emily Finnell to bring the matter up with legislative staff and explore possible solutions.

Dave Maturen suggested that they shouldn't wait until December to determine the monetary amount they're requesting. He proposed that if they could know the funding needs four to five months in advance, they could make the request and justify it later in December with the report. He

emphasized the importance of having the necessary data available then to respond to any questions about the request.

Emily Finnell mentioned that this might change their cycle and schedule for putting forward recommendations, as they are currently finalizing them quite close to the deadline. She pointed out that the report comes together just before Christmas, but to meet their timeline, they would need the necessary information by the very beginning of August. This would align with their budget meetings, where the budget is finalized in August and September. She noted that this could impact the Council's schedule, at least for the operational and maintenance (O&M) aspects within the program, and how they fit into the department's overall budget.

Laura Campbell confirmed if EGLE wanted to meet with legislative first and then let the committee know about the next steps such as forming an ad hoc group to discuss further.

Adam Wygant agreed this was a good course of action.

Bryan Burroughs mentioned that the timing is good. James responded by emphasizing the importance of ensuring that the Council has the necessary proposals. He explained that one of the reasons for formalizing the process in statute was to allow departments to submit proposals for changes, which would be filtered by higher-level priorities. He noted that even though the department cannot expect EGLE to give up its existing staff resources, their proposal is always prioritized. He also pointed out that, while the timing is crucial, there needs to be a clear process where the statutory body makes recommendations and ensures that EGLE's budget aligns with those recommendations. The key is to ensure that proposals don't take away from the limited resources available but are still put forward and given appropriate attention.

Adam Wygant expressed that he suspects they would still be able to support and advocate for the recommendations, even if the funding doesn't come directly from their own proposals for change. followed up by noting that they could testify on the value of the recommendations and the funding, even if it emerged from the appropriations process, rather than directly from their budget proposals. He mentioned that this support could come without relying on the budget officer or the Governor's office but instead be part of the larger appropriations process.

Lena Pappas inquired if there are other examples of councils that have or structure similarly that are working well in terms of how they're structuring their legislative asks.

Dave Maturen says he doesn't know of any, but there must be others out there.

Emily Finnell mentioned that he believes the ad hoc model is a strong approach. He suggested that, as a group, they can assess what will make sense moving forward, focusing on understanding the agency's role and their budget process. The goal would be to ensure that everyone involved understands the process clearly, and then they can figure out how the Council and agencies can support the recommendations effectively.

Laura Campbell agreed, noting this would allow for appropriate recommendation to the full Council for approval on how to move forward and if any changes need to be made for implementation.

Bryan Burroughs noted if there are any questions to reach out to the committee members.

Adam Wygant stated that while the report may not necessarily need to be completed in the August timeframe, it would be helpful to reach an agreement on recommendations by then. This would allow the recommendations to be considered in the process, with the report still coming later in the fall, remaining timely for the appropriations process.

Laura Campbell shared that in his experience, budgets are often the last element to be put together for projects. The process usually starts with discussing the idea, then working through the details, and once everyone approves, the cost is determined. He suggested that producing the report at a different time or at least having a ballpark figure for the budget earlier would be helpful and timely.

Dave Maturen mentioned that every year, there would be about a year and a half to finalize the budget before it gets presented to the legislature in the following spring or winter. He acknowledged that they might need to reorient the process, specifically regarding dollar expenses, but that other aspects could be handled later.

Emily Finnell emphasized that as a committee, they know that when they begin working on developing ideas, they typically start at the beginning of

January for the legislative report. While they are constantly thinking about things, they can adjust their schedule to ensure ideas come together sooner.

Bryan Burroughs confirmed the remaining questions. None noted.

**e. EGLE Update**

Jim Milne greeted the group and noted that he had significantly reduced the number of slides in the presentation, removing one about personnel updates. However, he still wanted to provide a quick personnel update.

He mentioned that Russ Helmer had transferred from GRMD to the Remediation and Redevelopment Division (RRD), Grand Rapids District. He also welcomed their latest hire, Mike Jugle, as the newest addition to the team.

Jim Milne provided an update on the program's metrics. To date, 1 Part 327 permit has been issued, with one still under review. Additionally, four amended registration compliance communications have been sent out. These communications are issued when stream flow conditions are sufficient for large volume withdrawals and when there are discrepancies between the as built/as operated characteristics and the registration details. Regarding pre-screening reviews for the Drinking Water Division, six reviews have been completed (4 Zone A and 2 Zone B), with three still pending. Two reviews remain incomplete as additional information is needed, and negotiations are ongoing for one of the pending reviews.

Dave Hamilton noted a question.

Jim Milne answered question, noting period of performance was generated from January through March 2025 (year-to-date).

James Milne shared an update on the SSR (Site-Specific Review) process. To date, 60 auto pass registrations have been received through the tool, alongside 50 specific review requests. Regarding SSR reviews, 37 SSRs have been issued, and an additional seven SSRs were retracted by applicants. As of the date of the update, there have been no SSR denials in 2025, and there are currently 6 SSRs still pending. Jim Milne noted referenced the percentage of SSRs completed within the statutory 10 business days, with the bottom graph showing this percentage over time. This is standard for the program.

Doug Needham noted if this was the normal number of registrations and SSRs for the first quarter (1/4).

Jim Milne noted yes, this is typically post-harvest, and pre-planting is the busiest time of the year, when water users are planning for coming year.

Doug Needham noted that almost half of the proposed LQWs are SSRs, which is a large percentage. Jim Milne agreed.

Laura Campbell asked if the recommendation been implemented regarding how to handle SSRs that cannot be completed within 10 business days? Specifically, if the review is not finished, are we communicating with the applicant to inform them of the delay and provide a new completion date, or if additional data is needed.

Jim Milne answered yes. The team is working on communicating with the applicant and, if applicable, the separate agent before the 10-day deadline to provide an update. If the review is not going to be completed on time, the team sets expectations for when it will be finished. Additionally, staff will reach out to the applicant if any further information is needed to complete the process.

Jim Milne noted the figure shows the locations of depleted water management areas as of April 2025. "Depleted" means that there is not enough stream flow currently available to authorize any additional new withdrawals or increased withdrawals. The table below provides details on these water management areas, including their stream temperature classification, index flow, and current depletion status.

Sydney Ruhala noted EGLE is in the process of developing a statewide network of monitoring wells. This initiative will provide long-term and seasonal groundwater elevation trend data for aquifer sustainability, and in the future, it will also be used to monitor background groundwater quality. Initially, the focus will be on water levels. This effort is tied to a grant received from USGS, which allows EGLE to become a new data provider to the National Groundwater Monitoring Network. The two-year grant ends in July 2025. The goal is to establish a statewide network in Michigan to gather the necessary data to address questions about aquifer sustainability and other related concerns. A subset of these wells will also contribute to the National Groundwater Monitoring Network.

Sydney Ruhala noted the map shown represents the current draft of the statewide monitoring project, which is being updated. It includes three types of wells marked in different colors. Green dots indicate wells already part of the National Groundwater Monitoring Network and monitored by USGS on an ongoing basis. EGLE is focusing on blue triangles and red dots. The blue triangles represent a combination of wells, including five in Allegan County

installed by MGS, which is contributing data to EGGLE for submission to the national network. Approximately 70 other wells marked in blue are pre-existing, inactive USGS wells that EGGLE is working to bring back online in coordination with USGS. Some require repairs but could be included in the statewide network and contribute data to the national system. EGGLE is prioritizing the use of existing wells, with plans to install new monitoring wells over time as data gaps are identified. The red dots represent additional inactive USGS wells that EGGLE has not yet located or assessed due to time constraints. These wells are documented in historical records, and EGGLE will continue efforts to locate and access them with USGS support. In parallel, EGGLE is developing a web service to transmit data to the USGS from the wells included in the national network.

Dave Hamilton asked a question regarding status of funding for this.

Sydney Ruhala confirmed they have funding. Noted utilizing state funding in the event something needs to be redeveloped and are looking at potential contracts.

Sydney Ruhala noted the next project update focused on EGGLE's new groundwater data management system. This system will use EQUIS, a platform developed by EarthSoft, to centralize, analyze, and share groundwater data across the agency. The goal is to consolidate groundwater information into one location, improving hydrogeological and geological understanding, which in turn will enhance conceptual site models and support better decision-making for environmental and public health protection. Additionally, the system will increase data accessibility for external partners and the public through publicly viewable dashboards and other tools. EQUIS offers robust reporting capabilities for internal and external users, including environmental and geotechnical data visualizations such as site maps, borehole logs, cross-sections, 2D/3D geologic models, geochemistry analysis, and statistical tools. It also integrates with ESRI's ArcGIS and supports customizable dashboards and widgets. The project is a multi-year, multi-phase initiative. The first phase involves migrating Wellogic records into EQUIS, with data migration expected to be completed by July 2025. This marks the transition into the production environment. Ultimately, EQUIS will replace Wellogic entirely, replicating its functionality within the new system. The timeline for full replacement is still being developed, but implementation of Wellogic functions in EQUIS is anticipated later in the summer or early fall of 2025.

Sydney Ruhala noted the final project update was on the Hydrologic Enhancement for Michigan Study, a collaborative effort between EGGLE and the USGS. This project stems from a set of recommendations made by the council in 2020. The study aims to enhance hydrologic data and modeling capabilities

across Michigan to support improved water resource management and planning. Howard Reeves confirmed it's a combination of a couple of recommendations.

Sydney Ruhala noted the overarching goal of the Hydrologic Enhancement for Michigan Study is to collect hydrogeological and hydrological data that supports a range of programs aimed at protecting Michigan's groundwater resources. The project includes several key components: a stream gage network analysis and optimization, groundwater monitoring well network analysis and optimization, an airborne electromagnetic (AEM) survey, and groundwater modeling. The stream gage network analysis evaluates how well the existing network represents stream systems in Michigan, considering factors such as stream size, thermal regime, and land use. This analysis will support the optimization of the network to better capture groundwater-surface water interactions and other hydrologic changes. Enhancements may include adding features like temperature sensors, cameras, or water quality auto-samplers to existing gages, and installing new stream gages where needed.

The monitoring well network component is evaluating the spatial coverage of wells across different topographic, geologic, climatic, and land-use environments, with plans to install new monitoring wells to fill gaps and improve understanding of groundwater level changes over time. This aspect overlaps with EGLE's work under the National Groundwater Monitoring Network grant. Another major part of the project is the AEM survey, which measures subsurface electrical conductivity to characterize geologic and hydrogeologic conditions. This fast, high-resolution technique provides detailed insights into aquifer materials and will be conducted by USGS in targeted areas of southwestern Michigan. Flights are currently planned for spring 2026, with EGLE and USGS still finalizing the survey area.

Dave Hamilton asked how deep it went.

Sydney Ruhala noted believed it to be 1,000 feet.

Howard Reeves noted when it comes to identifying the top of bedrock, the survey is expected to detect depths of around 300 feet. However, the intent is not to go excessively deep or interfere with private property—data collection will be focused and respectful of land use. USGS is conducting a significant amount of preparatory work using existing wells and geological data to inform their geophysicists. This helps calibrate the airborne instruments so they can accurately detect targeted geological features, such as the top of bedrock, without unnecessarily extending the survey depth.

Sydney Ruhala said as of now, USGS is in the process of developing work plans for each project task under the hydrologic enhancement study. Ongoing coordination between EGLE and USGS has been taking place, including a mid-March meeting to discuss the Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) survey. EGLE is finalizing the survey area and determining flight line density based on specific data objectives. In early April, the teams also met to review the stream gage network analysis. Additional meetings are scheduled for this week, including one with Michigan tribes to present an overview of the project and gather their feedback, and another with USGS and the Michigan Geological Survey (MGS) to discuss groundwater monitoring well network and plans for new well installations.

Question asked about the transition from Wellogic to EQulS for well records.

Sydney Ruhala noted Wellogic will remain open and function until everything is transferred to EQulS, with an anticipated training period allowed as well.

Adam Wygant clarified that although future scan records may still exist, the goal is to transition users seamlessly from Wellogic to EQulS, minimizing disruption through thoughtful change management. The intent is to maintain the familiar feel of Wellogic while operating entirely within EQulS. This transition requires ensuring all input tools, user permissions, and training are in place, as the system is used not only by EGLE but also by local health departments and water well drillers. The full switch will not occur until all stakeholders are comfortable, and the system is fully operational. The team is particularly focused on careful data mapping and reducing the risk of duplicative efforts, while also leveraging Michigan Geological Survey tools to clean and correct existing data—an important step given the level of error previously identified in current datasets.

Michael Frederick noted hopefully EQulS will be easier to use.

Adam Wygant noted shared a key lesson from his 12 years of IT development experience in the oil and gas sector: a core principle of IT development should be to make users' lives easier—otherwise, feedback will come swiftly.

Michael Frederick asked a question about the types of wells for groundwater monitoring network project.

Sydney Ruhala noted these are monitoring wells, so they wouldn't be used for water withdrawals and would be used for static groundwater levels over time.

Michael Frederick noted going to be predominantly in agricultural areas, given many of these wells are irrigation.

Sydney Ruhala noted she's unsure if they will be agricultural in nature and are currently a variety.

Dave Hamilton noted many wells were just put in a few years ago.

Michael Frederick asked if this is a part of the \$250,000 grant program.

Adam Wygant clarified this is a separate funding. The project received \$1 million in IT funding from the legislature, representing the first phase of approximately \$2 million in planned work. With an additional \$5 million anticipated for full build-out, the expanded system could integrate valuable datasets—such as professionally logged soil data and installed monitoring wells—to support modeling, contamination triage, and water availability analysis.

Tom Zimnicki asked if EGLE will be pulling in other datasets into EQUIS?

Adam Wygant confirmed, noting Wellogic is the primary data set, but the agency is hoping to pull from other files. Added that there's valuable soils and groundwater data currently stored in hard copy files. By leveraging optical character recognition (OCR) technologies to extract and convert this information into usable datasets, future researchers could access the data more easily—potentially eliminating the need to begin projects with extensive Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and manual digging.

Tom Zimnicki noted he was curious, given they are working on their own project which is collecting data which may be beneficial eventually.

Adam Wygant confirmed that is the hope of this project.

Bryan Burroughs asked a question on the stream gage analysis and optimization in the Groundwater Monitoring Network analysis and the optimization project timeline.

Sydney Ruhala noted it would be through December 2026.

Bryan Burroughs emphasized the value of identifying old monitoring wells that cover spatial areas where there are gaps, especially if these wells can provide access to historical data. He also pointed out the challenge of deciding where to add new monitoring wells, particularly when resources might be limited.

Burroughs highlighted the importance of systematic coverage across the state for future groundwater monitoring. Additionally, he acknowledged the potential synergy between the current work and long-term data planning, aiming to make the most of available resources and ensure the effectiveness of the monitoring network.

Howard Reeves noted the importance of collaborating upfront with Sarah's team at MGS, who are conducting extensive drilling for geologic characterization and monitoring wells. This collaboration will help EGLE understand where drilling is occurring and whether existing files can be used to identify gaps in the data. The focus is on establishing background conditions, as EGLE aims to fill in missing data and create a more comprehensive monitoring network. Reeves acknowledged that private companies are monitoring wells near production sites, but EGLE will not prioritize these areas. Instead, the team will focus on broader, general water data. He also raised the issue of fluctuating water levels due to heavy pumping, questioning the impact of these fluctuations on groundwater systems and how they might affect water sustainability in the region.

Adam Wygant mentioned that the team, including Howard, is managing a heavy workload, particularly with the goal of utilizing the ARPA funding by December 2026. He noted that some of the tasks discussed will be addressed through ongoing projects that will follow the completion of the gap analysis. This work will involve collaborating with the Data Collection Committee to identify priority areas for further development and expansion of the project.

Lena Pappas explained that the focus is on assessing the existing resources in the state, both to get what is currently available up and running and to address any existing liabilities. He hopes that, with the assistance of contracts, they will be ready for the outcomes of the network analysis once it is completed.

Howard Reeves discussed decisions related to monitoring groundwater levels, noting that while continuous groundwater level monitoring is valuable, it comes with higher capital and long-term operating expenses. He emphasized finding a balance between installing instruments for continuous monitoring and using other methods, such as quarterly or seasonal monitoring, to manage resources effectively. He pointed out that many existing monitoring stations are still operational, so determining the right frequency for data collection is a key consideration in this process.

Bryan Burroughs asked if there were any remaining questions for Sydney.

Howard Reeves shifted the focus to another issue he's involved with, regarding proposals that could limit local governments' ability to regulate gravel. He mentioned the lack of a comprehensive survey of gravel resources in the state and questioned whether the data being collected, particularly related to water levels, could be utilized for this purpose. Richard Norton asked if such data could potentially be leveraged to create a better understanding of gravel distribution in the state.

Adam Wygant noted provided an update on the gravel aggregate assessments being funded by a 2024 budget appropriation of \$5,000,000 through the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for the Michigan Geologic Survey. He mentioned that this project would span over four to five years, with approximately a year and a half already completed. The team is currently conducting an inventory and mapping known gravel resources across the state. They are also preparing to send out staff into the field to assist with the project.

Hannah Arnett and Megan Cameron provided updates on Water Withdrawal Assessment Tool Modernization. Discussed several modernization projects underway, in collaboration with a contractor and the Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (DTMB). The primary goal of these projects is to increase accessibility and improve the usability of the tools available. One major improvement is the integration of stream flow depletion tools into the platform, allowing users to see and interact with them. Additionally, the project aims to make more data accessible, including internal data layers that were previously available but difficult to find. A key feature of the update is a more efficient site-specific review process, which includes sharing data and improving the submission process for users.

Emphasized that the updates are still in draft form, and some details may change as the project progresses. The goal is to simplify the process for users, particularly those who use the tools daily to submit registrations and reports. The team is waiting for additional code and the implementation of new designs, including login changes, before setting a go-live date. The draft of the new homepage is designed to make content easier to read and navigate, with features like a start button leading to a login screen for users with accounts. The tool will then allow users to register a new withdrawal, modify existing registrations, or cancel them.

The process for registering a new withdrawal will be like the current system, using a map for location input. Users will select a model for their withdrawal and input relevant data, such as aquifer transmissivity and storage coefficient. The updated tool will also automatically trigger a site-specific review if certain

parameters are changed (e.g., using the Hunt 2003 or the Ward & Lough 2011 analytical equations for calculating stream flow depletions from a well, instead of the WWAT's default equation, the Hunt 1999 analytical equation). The team is adding tooltips and pictures to assist users in understanding the data and values they are entering. Finally, the summary screen has been redesigned to streamline the process, reducing unnecessary clicks and providing a clearer view of all parameters before submission.

Dave Hamilton noted if there is a default option.

Megan Cameron noted yes. It will auto populate to make data easier, noting you don't have to change data if you don't want to and that so long as it runs clean, it will not trigger an SSR.

Megan Cameron and Hannah Arnett continued to outline additional improvements and updates for the system. One key feature is the ability to auto-populate some user information, such as names and addresses, from previous entries, although some fields will still need to be manually filled in. To help farmers and users with multiple registrations, a "site name" field has been added to make it easier to link registrations to specific sites.

For users with well log IDs, the new system will allow them to enter the ID when submitting a registration, which is particularly useful for well replacements. Additionally, there will be a section for attaching supporting documents for site-specific reviews. Once a registration is submitted, both the user and EGLE will receive an email with all the documents attached, ensuring everyone is on the same page.

The registration process also now includes a summary screen to review all the parameters before submission, with some updates aimed at improving usability. Notably, the system now offers measurements in acre-inches rather than gallons, a change designed to accommodate user preferences. A snapshot of all changes made during registration will be included in the final registration document.

Another significant update is the inclusion of updated map layers showing current and active zones, which users will be able to view before finalizing their registration. These layers, including information about Water Management Areas (WMAs), will be accessible either via the website or the application itself. Users will be able to download these layers, and any open data that cannot be housed on the platform will be made available through the EGLE open data page.

Finally, the system will include a registration layer on the map, allowing users to view where active registrations are located, enhancing transparency and coordination among stakeholders.

Asked if there were any questions or thoughts?

Question raised regarding the selection of models for water system analysis, specifically asking if multiple models should be tested to determine the best fit.

Responded that if multiple models are available, it might be beneficial to explore each one under the specific conditions at the location in question. It was suggested trying different models to see which one works best, particularly if the models are designed for various geologic conditions. Noted different models are based on different assumptions. For example, one model (referred to as Hunt 1999) assumes that the water is drawn from a uniform sand layer, while another model (like Hunt 2003) assumes a three-layer system with an aquifer. The Ward & Lough 2011" model, he mentioned, is based on a more complex system involving three layers as well, offering a broader range of potential scenarios. Noted that while there's nothing preventing the user from testing multiple models, the key is selecting the right model based on the specific assumptions about the geologic conditions (such as the presence of aquifers) at the site. Essentially, the user would pick a model based on the aquifer system they believe most closely matches their location.

Lena Pappas also noted this is the whole point of submitting the information, so that the system will automatically default the information and support the estimate.

Bryan Burroughs noted his own experience. Noted that once a request is submitted, EGLE will review and verify the data provided. While consultants can run multiple models, the Hunt '99 model is currently the only one that qualifies for an online screening tool pass due to statutory requirements. If a different model is used, the team can submit data to argue its suitability, but this will automatically trigger a site-specific due process. highlighted that this approach allows flexibility in model evaluation while ensuring adherence to legal standards.

Noted users should have a semblance to use the screening tool or that it will provide guidance on how to use it.

Adam Wygant noted EGLE addressed concerns about the repeatability and consistency of the process, particularly regarding the redesign of the Watt tool. The redesign introduced "batch tools," now referred to as "depletion tools."

This new approach ensures that all stakeholders, including agencies, farmers, and consultants, are using the same solutions, creating a more standardized process. emphasized that this change aims to improve trust and address previous criticisms by ensuring that everyone is working from the same data and methods.

Laura Campbell noted this is huge.

Bryan Burroughs followed up with a question regarding the tool's capability to provide information on watershed management areas. He expressed a need to be able to identify how changes in pumping levels correspond to predictive depletions in surrounding areas. Burroughs clarified that he's often had difficulty finding this data and asked if the tool would output surrounding water management areas that might be affected, including predicted depletion amounts and flow estimates, in a more accessible way.

EGLE confirmed users will be able to see this.

Laura Campbell noted once the new system is in place, will users still be able to access it via MiLogin and explore without logging in, or will logging in be required to even access the system. She also noted if there are any training material or guidance available for users to learn how to navigate the system.

Megan Cameron confirmed there will be plenty of training available and it will be accessible when it comes to login.

Bryan Burroughs noted expressed concern about the new system requiring users to log in to access it, which could create a barrier to accessibility. He highlighted the challenges users may face, especially those who are trying to explore the system on their own. The requirement to log in could deter citizens who want to explore the tool casually, potentially making them give up after repeated unsuccessful attempts. While he acknowledged the need for security, he emphasized that the login requirement could discourage user engagement, particularly for individuals who are unfamiliar with the system.

Adam Wygant noted he's not a fan of MiLogin either. Acknowledged the challenges of requiring logins for the system, emphasizing the security concerns, especially in Michigan, which is a high-value target for cyberattacks. He mentioned that this requirement was driven by guidance from the Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (DTMB) and was also related to audit issues. He suggested that users could still explore the system without logging in as long as they were not registering or making changes. In that case, no data would be saved, and users could freely navigate without

their information being stored. However, once users start interacting with registration or modification processes, they would need to log in, as that would trigger saving their data.

Hannah Arnett noted they tried to ensure there wouldn't be a time-out restriction. Lena Pappas confirmed looking to post training material in line with portal use.

Abigail Eaton expressed concern about the requirement for users to log in, sharing her experience with MDARD where 25% of individuals who were supposed to report water usage have dropped off due to the login process. She argued that requiring users to log in before they can even explore the system is a significant barrier, especially for those who may only want to assess if the system is worth using before registering. She emphasized that this login requirement creates a business burden and is a serious problem, though she acknowledged that they are stuck with the current system.

Laura Campbell noted there may be a streamlined version of the login.

Abigail Eaton clarified that her "Mi Login" for citizens is automatically linked with the Secretary of State account, meaning users are logged in for other purposes, such as supporting various services. She explained that the water uses reporting system plans to transition using "Mi Login for business," which she believes makes more sense for a variety of reasons. Abigail Eaton further explained that "my login for business" allows for greater flexibility, as it enables businesses to have employees register on their behalf—something not possible with "Mi Login for citizens," which is a personal account intended for private individuals.

Adam Wygant noted that he still having to do necessary steps to validate identity.

Hannah Arnett noted further questions can be sent to their team.

Laura Campbell noted she sent an update on the media team after Emily Finnell inquired about it.

Adam Wygant applauded the work of Hannah Arnett and Megan Cameron.

**f. Future**

**a. 2025 Meeting Dates (at Con Hall unless others offer to host) (\*Quorum critical meetings)**

Bryan Burroughs noted future meetings.

- June 10
- August 12
- October 14
- December 9

**b. Formats**

**c. Quorum**

**g. Open Comments (Three Minute Limit)**

Bryan Burroughs asked for open comments.

Abigail Eaton mentioned that MDARD will be rolling out a new water use reporting database this year. She suggested that when efforts to spread the word about the water withdrawal assessment tool changes begin, they should be coordinated with the rollout of the new database.

No further open comments.

**h. Motion to Adjourn**

Bryan Burroughs moved to end the meeting. Meeting was seconded by Howard Reeves.