



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

GARLIN GILCHRIST II
LT. GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE

No. 2026-1

To: State Department Directors and Autonomous Agency Heads
From: Governor Gretchen Whitmer
Date: January 15, 2026
Re: Establishing the Michigan Geologic Hydrogen Exploration and Preparedness Initiative

My administration remains committed to leading the future of clean energy and ensuring that the jobs and economic opportunities we create in the process directly benefit communities across Michigan. Geologic hydrogen—hydrogen found beneath the Earth’s surface—presents such an opportunity. Michigan has been identified as one of the most promising regions in the world for naturally occurring geologic hydrogen, drawing significant multi-sector attention. To harness this economic opportunity, I am signing today’s executive directive to create an initiative that will allow Michigan to lead the future of geologic hydrogen and clean energy.

Geologic hydrogen has the potential to fundamentally reshape global energy systems, driving down costs and significantly reducing emissions across manufacturing and transportation sectors. By presenting a path to produce clean energy at a scale and price competitive with fossil fuels, geologic hydrogen offers a uniquely clean fuel source that could help Michigan—and the nation—decarbonize some of the most pollution-heavy sectors of our economy, including manufacturing, heavy-duty transportation, and maritime shipping. Low-cost hydrogen in these sectors would both help accelerate Michigan’s own economy-wide energy transition and make Michigan a national leader as other states and countries ramp up their own transitions to cleaner, more affordable industrial production.

Michigan is uniquely positioned to benefit from the growth of hydrogen energy. The geologic hydrogen in the Midcontinent Rift that lies beneath Michigan could, if commercially viable, generate tens of millions of dollars annually in direct state revenue, and drive an even larger indirect fiscal impact that benefits our families and communities. At the same time, Michigan could see billions of dollars in new economic activity by tapping into a fraction of the U.S. hydrogen economy, which is projected to reach tens of billions of dollars in the coming years. And clean geologic hydrogen could preserve and create thousands of good-paying industrial jobs by keeping Michigan industries competitive in a price-sensitive, energy-restricted global market—while still reducing industrial emissions.

I have determined that, to ensure Michigan is fully prepared to responsibly explore, evaluate, and potentially develop geologic hydrogen resources, a coordinated, whole-of-government strategy is required. Accordingly, by this Directive, I instruct my Departments to explore the feasibility and benefits of—and prepare for—a Michigan-centered approach to geologic hydrogen.

Section 1 of article 5 of the Michigan Constitution of 1963 vests the executive power of the State of Michigan in the governor.

Section 8 of article 5 of the Michigan Constitution of 1963 places each principal department under the supervision of the governor.

Acting under the Michigan Constitution of 1963 and Michigan law, I direct the following:

1. The Michigan Geologic Hydrogen Exploration and Preparedness Initiative (the “Initiative”) is hereby established within the Executive Office of the Governor.
 - A. The Initiative is established to coordinate statewide planning, regulatory readiness, workforce and economic strategy, infrastructure assessment, and environmental evaluation necessary to prepare for the exploration and development of geologic hydrogen in Michigan.
 - B. All Departments shall aid the Initiative by providing information, assistance, and data as needed to support the Initiative, consistent with applicable laws and regulations.
2. On or before April 1, 2026, the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy shall submit a report to the Executive Office of the Governor on:
 - A. Existing statutory and regulatory authority to permit geologic hydrogen exploration, production, transportation, and storage, and any impediments in current law,
 - B. Permitting frameworks appropriate for hydrogen development,
 - C. Technical research needs and opportunities to better understand geologic hydrogen resources,
 - D. Estimates of potential carbon and criteria pollutant changes resulting from hydrogen production and end use,
 - E. Estimates of changes to emissions in key industrial and transportation sectors benchmarked against targets in the MI Healthy Climate Plan, and
 - F. The potential use of existing oil and gas wells and related infrastructure for hydrogen production, storage, and monitoring, including safety considerations and best practices for both aboveground and subsurface uses.
3. On or before April 1, 2026, the Department of Natural Resources shall submit a report

to the Executive Office of the Governor on:

- A. Any legal impediments to leasing state-owned subsurface rights for hydrogen exploration and production,
 - B. Any changes in legal or administrative procedures necessary to enable leasing, and
 - C. Permitting frameworks and resource stewardship appropriate for hydrogen development.
4. On or before April 1, 2026, the Michigan Infrastructure Office shall submit a report to the Executive Office of the Governor on:
- A. Potential impact on Michigan's job market of hydrogen exploration, production, and downstream industrial uses,
 - B. Workforce needs and retraining opportunities,
 - C. Projected growth in new business formation,
 - D. Anticipated statewide economic benefit,
 - E. Assessment of the role that geologic hydrogen has in advancing goals outlined in the MI Future Mobility Plan, and
5. The Michigan Public Service Commission should submit a report to the Executive Office of the Governor on:
- A. The suitability of existing energy infrastructure—including but not limited to natural gas pipelines—for hydrogen blending, transport, or dedicated use,
 - B. Associated safety requirements and system constraints,
 - C. Necessary upgrades,
 - D. Long-term infrastructure planning considerations, and
 - E. Jurisdictional, utility planning, and legal or policy issues related to hydrogen transportation or storage in regulated systems.
6. Interdepartmental Coordination
- A. Departments preparing reports shall coordinate closely as they prepare their reports to ensure accuracy, consistency, and completeness.
 - B. All state Departments shall aid other Departments by providing information, assistance, and data as needed to support the Initiative, consistent with applicable laws and regulations.

7. No provision in this Directive impairs the authority of Departments or agencies under state law.

This directive is effective immediately.

Thank you for your cooperation in its implementation.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Gretchen Whitmer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gretchen" and last name "Whitmer" clearly distinguishable.

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR