



**WLEB
Advisory Group
Meeting**

August 3rd, 2023

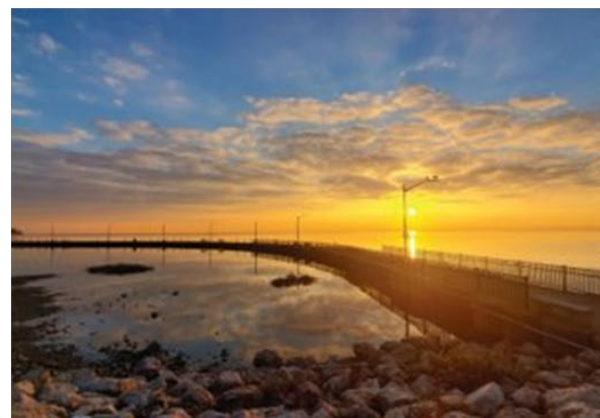


Participants

Perspectives	Participants
Watershed Councils	4
Farmers	7
Farm Business	4
Extension	1
Conservation Districts	4
Property Owners Association	1
Utilities	2
Municipalities	3
Environmental Advocacy	5
Conservation	3
Regional Planning	1
Business	1
Lake Business	5
Totals	47



Project Overview





Goals for the Day

- Build community among Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB) groups
- Foster trust
- Generate input for the 2023 Domestic Action Plan



Community Guidelines

- **Open-mindedness:** Listen to and respect all points of view.
- **Acceptance:** Suspend judgment as best you can.
- **Curiosity:** Seek to understand rather than persuade.
- **Discovery:** Question assumptions, look for new insights.
- **Sincerity:** Speak from your heart and personal experience.
- **Brevity:** Go for honesty and depth, but don't go on and on.



Ice Breaker

- What is something that has changed in your watershed since you started working in it?
- What is a change in your watershed would you like to see in the future?



Director Tim Boring

Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural
Development



Domestic Action Plan Update

- Tim Boring and Michelle Selzer
 - Dpt. of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Phil Argiroff
 - Dpt. of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
- Steve Shine
 - Dpt. of Natural Resources



Lunch

We will return at 1 pm



Summary of Feedback from WLEB Advisory Group Interviews

WLEB Advisory Group Meeting
August 3rd 2023



Participants

Note: Some members share responsibilities with another member. These numbers represent the total number of participants from unique organizations.

Perspectives	Total Participants	Statewide	Upriver (NE of Huron River)	Monroe County	Lenawee County	Hillsdale County
Watershed Councils	4		2	1	1	
Farmers	9		1	2	3	3
Agriculture Services	5	3			1	1
Farmer Associations	3	3				
Conservation Districts	4		1	1	1	1
Property Owners Association	1				1	
Utilities	5		3	1	1	
Municipalities	4			3	1	
Environmental Advocacy	5	3	2			
Conservation	3	3				
Regional Planning	2		2			
Business	2			1	1	
Lake Business	5		1	4		
Totals	47	13	9	11	9	5



Motivations to Participate

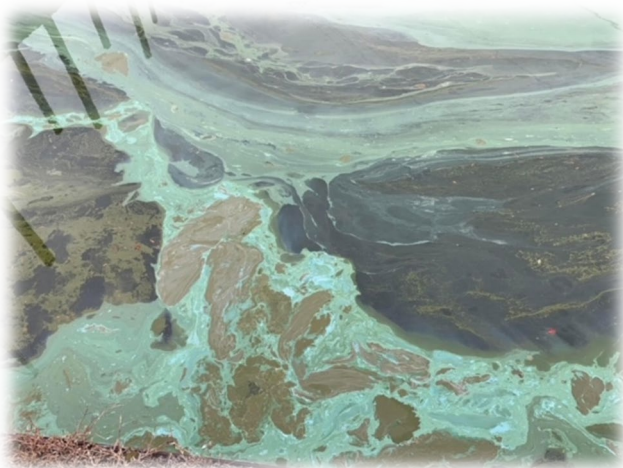
- Protect Great Lakes Water Quality
- Expand Networks
- Represent Community or Organization
- Bring Diverse Group Together Around a Common Effort



Motivation for Participating

"Hearing that Lake Erie was in trouble again, where the algal blooms were choking the life out of the lake and creating dead zones and this nasty, toxic algal bloom. That personally bothered me because I grew up fishing. I love Lake Erie. It is my spot, and the memories and all of that. Knowing that we cleaned it once, so why have we put it in jeopardy again? I wanted to do what I could to help with the problem."

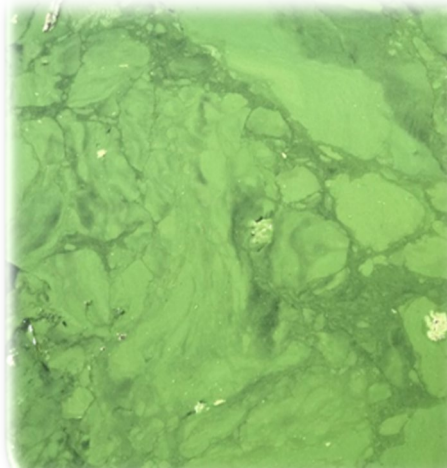
"Everyone upriver affects our river quality, so we want good stewards above us, but we also want to be good stewards downstream."



Fall 2022



July 2019



August 2017

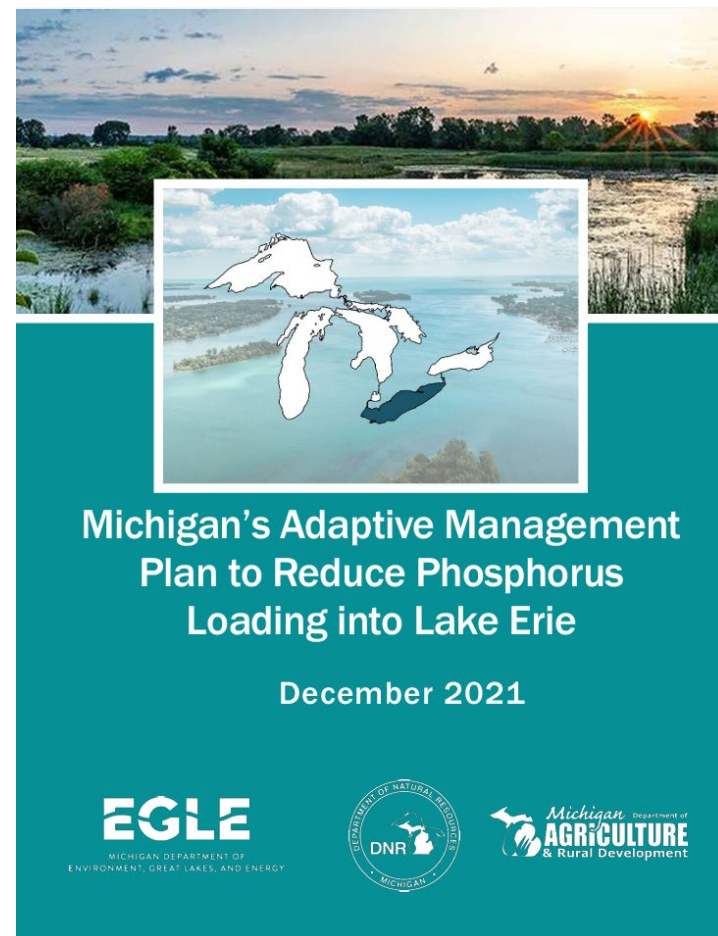
"We can learn from what works well in other places. We have 20% of the world's freshwater, there is no reason for us to not be the most sustainable state."

"We are all part of the problem, and all part of the solution."



Goals

- Coordinate Efforts
- Improve the Domestic Action Plan to Accomplish 40% Phosphorus Reduction Goal
- Implement Water Quality Practices
- Reduce Algae Bloom Problem
- Improve Lake Erie to Support Tourism and Fishing





Quotes about Goals

"We need a coordinated effort: There are tons of projects, districts, universities, everyone is collecting data and putting out different trial practices and working on BMPs but we don't have a cohesive focus for all of that data."

"The DAP could be an effective guiding document to accelerate this to get to end points - conservation on land leads to impact on water quality."

"Make the DAP the best it can be. Lay the groundwork for the next 5 years."

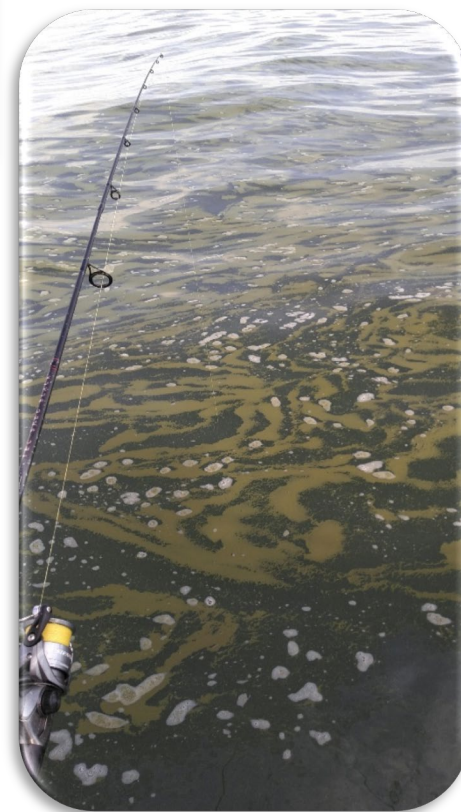
"Help spread the word about the adverse impact of the algae situation on the lake and all the economies associated with it."

"Help growers take that next step to being more conservation friendly and implement conservation practices on more acres to reduce potential runoff."



Threats to Water Quality

- Public Apathy
- Algae Blooms
 - Shallow Lake
 - Intense Rainfall Events
 - Excess Phosphorus
- Industrial Contaminants
- Biological Contaminants





Going Well:



Detroit Wastewater
Treatment Plant

- WWTPs have Reduced Phosphorus
- Research Measuring Water Quality
- Area of Concern (AoC) Program
- MAEAP is a Good Starting Point for Farmer Engagement
- The State is Starting Conversations About Innovation in the Agriculture Community
- State is Allocating Funding and Dedicating Staff to WLEB





Key Barriers

- Staffing Shortages – Not Enough Boots on the Ground
- Lack of Trust, Cohesive Effort, and a Clear Message
- Lack of Monitoring/Data Collection
- Funding is Not Flexible Enough
- Public Misperceptions
- Limited Regulatory Authority
- Concern About Future Regulations



Comments about Barriers

"Investing in research and monitoring - you don't know what you don't measure - need a balance between funding monitoring and funding solutions - can't feasibly monitor every body of water."

"Boots on the ground work is lacking. We need people to promote and implement DAP actions."

"Projects were tied to grants and grants will only allow a certain percentage of staff time to go to on the ground work."

"There is disjointed data across watersheds over short periods of time. We need long-term programs to detect real changes, understand what is going on."

"We lack a shared collective vision that we are all working towards."



Ideas

- Education from Elementary to Adult
- Coordinate Existing Efforts
- Train More People to Provide Soil Nutrition Consults
- Build Stronger Farmer Networks
- Create Regulations that Allow for Different Farm Needs
- Improve Application Processes
- Offset Costs of Infrastructure Improvements with Grants



Education

Bring agriculture and soil science education to all students in Southeast Michigan:



Michigan Farm Bureau's FARM Science Lab includes hands-on programming to increase agricultural awareness.



Indiana's Mobile Learning Lab includes programming about healthy soils and clean water



Comments about Rules/Regulations

"Farmers don't have a lot of faith in regulations - concern about regulations that are designed as one size fits all...personalize programs and be flexible to meet the needs of a diversity of farmers."

"Regulations are not strong enough. No one is watching, instead assuming good faith. Over-applying manure and fudging paperwork is common."

"Set a rule that gives fertilizer retailers the power to say no to spraying. Custom fertilizer companies may come and spray right before a major rain event because the farmer insists and there is no regulation for them to point to saying they can't spray, and it is bad for business to say no without a rule to point to."



Changing Mindsets

“I believe that producers look at profitability and conservation. If it were a line, they're on the opposite ends of the scale. Any time you move towards one, you move away from the other. I don't think that's true. We can incorporate those together and make a profit off it and be sustainable. Being sustainable is being able to farm another year.”



Communication

- Create a Public Communication Plan
- Create an Information Dashboard for the General Public
- Transparency
- Communicate Through a Range of Platforms



When we asked how members want to hear from the state:

"Clear communication between all the entities – a sense of collaboration and teamwork."

"Joint statements from governments, farmer organizations, and conservation organizations could send a stronger message than any entity alone."

"We need a dashboard - barometer of progress - here is where we started, current lay of the land, where we need to go to achieve our goals. Transparent and consistent."

"Transparent, clear dialogue during meetings, conferences, state gatherings."

"Be real about what is going on."

Communicate through:

- Annual meetings
- Email
- Newsletters
- Social Media
- Press releases
- Dashboard/website
- Word of mouth



Response to Advisory Group Input

- Tim Boring and Michelle Selzer
 - Dpt. of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Phil Argiroff
 - Dpt. of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
- Steve Shine
 - Dpt. of Natural Resources



Breakout Groups

Find your group!

Move to next station every 10 min

Report out



Drive to YORK

See you at YORK for happy hour 4-5 pm

1928 Packard St. Ann Arbor