

Michigan

Top policy recommendations to reduce runoff pollution

Based on the policy landscape analysis conducted by the Alliance for the Great Lakes and Freshwater Future, the following key recommendations are necessary to advance toward the state of Michigan's phosphorus reduction goal:

- 1. Require comprehensive nutrient reduction planning:** Michigan has no requirements for nutrient reduction planning to reduce agricultural runoff and instead has an optional program called the Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). Nutrient reduction planning, including best management practices for fertilizer application and land management, is integral to the reduction of runoff pollution from agricultural lands and should be a statewide requirement.
- 2. Ban application on frozen, snow-covered and saturated ground:** Michigan has no statewide restriction on spreading manure and fertilizer on frozen, snow-covered and saturated ground, though it does have a limited policy applicable only to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO). This increases the likelihood of runoff and nutrient loss since nutrients are not absorbed while snowmelt and rainfall carry remaining nutrients into nearby waterways.
- 3. Improve water quality monitoring:** Phosphorus loadings are monitored by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), which monitors and reports on twenty-six river mouths in Michigan annually for phosphorus, including several rivers and tributaries in the western Lake Erie basin and an additional fifty randomly selected sites each year. While this approach is significant, it leaves several areas without monitoring. The state should increase monitoring to include both annual and spring loadings and identify sources of phosphorus loadings to inform further policy reform.



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- 4. Expand wastewater infrastructure requirements to include green infrastructure:** With changing weather patterns and increased rainfall, current infrastructure is not well equipped to handle the large volume of water produced. Michigan has taken significant steps to bring awareness to and reduce storm and wastewater pollution through its statewide, mandatory combined sewer overflow reporting program, green infrastructure requirements for the Detroit wastewater treatment plant NPDES permit, and Solid Waste and Sustainability Advisory Panel (SWSAP). Michigan should continue on this path, expanding efforts to incorporate green infrastructure and innovation, increase funding for infrastructure improvements, and implement seasonal limits for all wastewater treatment plants.
- 5. Implement jurisdiction-wide septic codes:** Michigan has no statewide septic code, leading to no uniformity in septic system installation and maintenance across localities. Michigan should develop statewide policies with requirements to ensure installation, maintenance, and connection to public sewers are regulated uniformly across localities, including incorporation of minimum safety standards.
- 6. Expand wetland restoration efforts:** Michigan is one of only two states in the US that has legal authority to implement wetland protection requirements under section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act, however, wetlands continue to suffer and compliance is an issue identified by the US Environmental Protection Agency. The state must implement improved policies and practices to protect wetlands in order to see needed impact and comply with federal clean water regulations.

Status of runoff reduction policies



Non-existent

Assigned to areas that have no policy directive **or** policy directives are so narrow in scope and application they are for all intents and purposes, non-existent



Incomplete

Assigned to areas that have substantive policy directives but lack completeness due to loopholes or limited oversight or enforcement (e.g., winter spreading restrictions)



Complete

Assigned to areas that have substantial policy directives without loopholes and/or significant oversight or enforcement

* Urgent Priority

Assigned to policy areas that require immediate attention across the region (12-24 months)

While Michigan has taken some steps toward reducing nutrient and runoff pollution to Lake Erie, significant improvements are needed to achieve the goal of a 40% phosphorus reduction. The Alliance for the Great Lakes and Freshwater Future conducted a landscape analysis of the most crucial policy areas related to phosphorous pollution. Below is a summary of findings:

Agricultural Policies

	Status
Nutrient reduction planning *	
Winter spreading *	
Cover crop adoption	
Wetland restoration and natural filtration	
Monitoring and enforcement	

Urban Source Policies

	Status
Wastewater treatment	
Septic system management	
Combined sewer overflows	
Green infrastructure adoption	

Watershed Monitoring and Reporting

	Status
Phosphorus monitoring and reporting *	

About

The Alliance for the Great Lakes works to protect the Great Lakes for today and tomorrow. We involve tens of thousands of people each year in advocacy, volunteering, education, and research to ensure the lakes are healthy and safe for all. The Alliance is headquartered in Chicago with offices in Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Muskegon, and Milwaukee. For more information visit www.greatlakes.org.

Since 1996, Freshwater Future has worked to build effective, community-based citizen action to protect and restore the waters and habitats of the Great Lakes region. We provide grants and professional development services to over 2,000 community groups in both the U.S. and Canada, as well as elevate the voices of grassroots groups and local communities in policy debates on the state, provincial, and federal levels. Learn more at www.freshwaterfuture.org.