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Great Lakes Protection

Jeff Mann, General Counsel and Chief Editor

Office of the Great Lakes

Part 329 (Great Lakes Protection) of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act establishes the Office of the Great Lakes. Situated in the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), the Office is designated as Michigan's primary agency for the "development of policies, programs, and procedures to protect, enhance, and manage the Great Lakes".¹ The Office of the Great Lakes is responsible for all of the following duties:

- Advising the Governor, the Director of EGLE, and the directors of other State departments on steps needed to coordinate State policy and actions on the Great Lakes and to implement an ecosystem approach to Michigan's Great Lakes policies.
- Representing the State at the national level for Michigan's Great Lakes interests and before Great Lakes policy development bodies such as the International Joint Commission.
- Ensuring adequate research and staff work to maintain Michigan's regional leadership in resolving Great Lakes problems.
- Promoting the wise use of Michigan ports and Great Lakes water transportation, as well as the Great Lakes tourism industry.
- Advocating Michigan's interests in actions, policies, and legislation affecting the Great Lakes proposed in other Great Lakes states, Canadian provinces, Great Lakes policy development bodies, and the Federal government.²

The Michigan Great Lakes Protection Fund

Part 329 also creates the Michigan Great Lakes Protection Fund. The Fund receives money from the Great Lakes Protection Fund, gifts and contributions to the Fund, and other sources provided by law. Money in the Michigan Great Lakes Protection Fund at the close of the fiscal year remains in the Fund and does not lapse to the General Fund.³ Under Part 329, money in the Michigan Great Lakes Protection Fund must be used only for programs or grants to supplement existing Great Lakes research and protection programs consistent with the purposes of Part 331 (Regional Great Lakes Protection Fund) including the following:

- Research on the economic, environmental, and human health effects of contamination in the Great Lakes.
- The collection and analysis of data on the Great Lakes.
- The development of new or improved environmental cleanup technologies.
- Research to assess the effectiveness of pollution control policies.
- The assessment of the health of Great Lakes fish, waterfowl, and other organisms.
- Other programs consistent with the purposes of Part 331.⁴

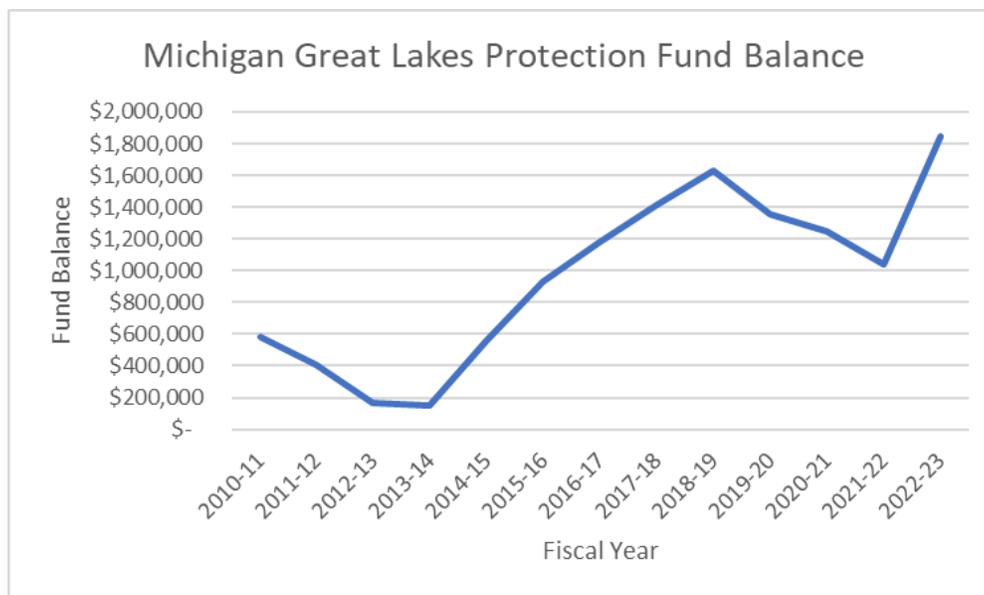
¹ MCL 324.32903.

² *Id.*

³ MCL 324.32905.

⁴ MCL 324.32907.

The figure below shows a history of the Michigan Great Lakes Protection Fund's balance from fiscal year (FY) 2010-11 through FY 2022-23.⁵



Immediate Past and Current Projects

As noted above, Michigan Great Lakes Protection Fund money must be used for programs or grants to supplement existing Great Lakes research and protection programs. The table below includes a list of current and recent past projects that have been supported by Fund dollars. A description of the projects currently underway is presented in more detail below.

Project Title	Grantee	Project Dates	Amount
Strategic Planning and Communications Support for Ox Creek Restoration Project	University of Michigan - MSG*	11/1/23-4/30/25	\$79,990
Water User Committee and User Manual Integrated Assessment Project	University of Michigan - MSG*	7/1/21-6/30/24	\$224,877
Development of a Tribal-State Collaborative Stewardship Plan for Manoomin in Michigan	University of Michigan	3/1/22-2/29/24	\$100,000
Institutional Controls for Groundwater Management: Long-term Costs and Their Impact for Policy	Michigan State University	7/1/21-6/30/23	\$349,808

Source: EGLE Michigan Great Lakes Protection Fund website. *MSG-Michigan Sea Grant, a cooperative program operated by the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

- Strategic Planning and Communications Support for Ox Creek Restoration Project. The funding supports the development of the Ox Creek Restoration and Revitalization Strategic Plan. The Plan will provide an overview of the vision, goals, and strategies for long-term funding, capacity building and governance, and stewardship of the Ox Creek corridor (near Benton Harbor, MI).⁶
- Water User Committee and User Manual Integrated Assessment Project. The integrated assessment project will develop a water user committee (WUC) user manual. The manual is intended to provide WUCs with information, tools, and tactics to develop solutions to manage water use sustainably.⁷

⁵ The author extends his appreciation to Jonah Houtz, Fiscal Analyst, for his assistance in the preparation of this report.

⁶ "Michigan Great Lakes Protection Fund", Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. Retrieved 2-28-2024.

⁷ *Id.* A WUC is generally composed of all entities that make large-scale withdrawals of water from, and local government officials within, a watershed. A WUC also might include a subgroup of the watershed's residents to provide advice or pertinent information. The purpose of a WUC is to provide a collaborative framework for users within a watershed to agree as to how water in the watershed will be used.