



Recommendations on Groundwater Use Management in Michigan

A Joint Position Statement of

Michigan Water Environment Association Michigan Section, American Water Works Association Michigan Rural Water Association

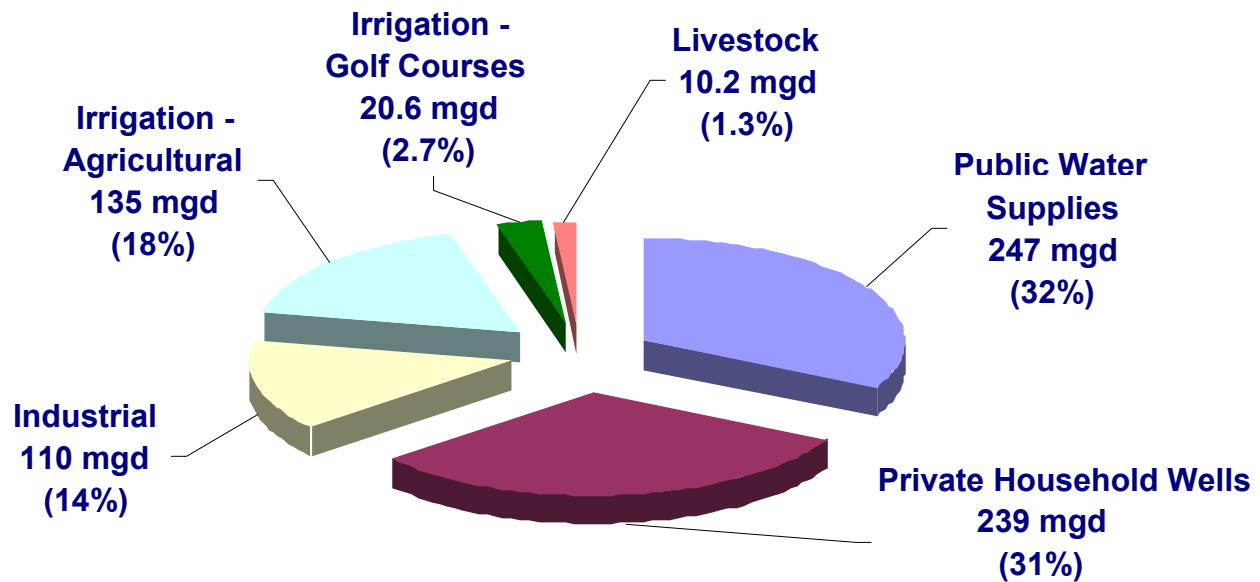
Protection of Michigan's water resources is of paramount concern to members of the Michigan Water Environment Association (MWEA), the Michigan Section of the American Water Works Association (MSAWWA), and the Michigan Rural Water Association (MRWA). The mission of the MWEA is to be the recognized authority on and advocate for preserving, restoring and enhancing Michigan's water resources. MSAWWA pursues the knowledge, skills and technology necessary for public water suppliers to produce a safe, adequate and reliable supply of drinking water. MRWA strives to provide resources, education and networking to Michigan's rural water utilities. All three associations are dedicated to protecting Michigan's waters with their members supporting public involvement through awareness, willingness to support clean water activities, and promoting community health and public confidence.

Michigan Relies on Groundwater: We Need To Protect It

Groundwater plays an important role in Michigan's natural environment, our economy, and our citizens' very lives. Groundwater represents a huge natural storage reserve for fresh water, providing essential "baseflow" (70 to 80% of total flow) in Michigan rivers and streams during dry weather. More than one-third of Michigan's groundwater withdrawals are utilized by industrial and agricultural water users. Groundwater is also the primary source of drinking water for nearly half of Michigan's residents.

Of the nearly 4.5 million Michigan residents who rely on groundwater for their drinking water, about 2.6 million draw their water from private wells. Michigan has over 1¼ million private household wells, more than any other state. Individual private household wells typically withdraw less than 200 gallons per day of groundwater.

Estimated Groundwater Usage in Michigan (in million gallons per day)



(Information used to construct chart from USGS "Estimated Use of Water in the United States in 2000" and MDEQ "Water Withdrawals for Major Water Uses in Michigan 2001.")

Note: Irrigation water withdrawal estimates are based on total annual usage divided by 365 days, instead of the actual length of the irrigation season (approximately 120 days.) Daily withdrawal rates are significantly larger during the irrigation season.

During this time of heightened legislative awareness of our State's natural subsurface water resource it is especially appropriate that we all take a few minutes to consider and appreciate this abundant resource and take responsibility for protecting it.

- ◆ Michigan has completed the development of a statewide groundwater inventory and map. The inventory and map are based solely on existing information.

Using the inventory and map as a starting point, there should be a more thorough and complete evaluation of the State's groundwater resources via the collection of sufficient data to adequately characterize major aquifers, in terms of sustainable production capacity. Groundwater withdrawals within a basin, such as a watershed or subwatershed, should be limited to what that basin can actually sustain without significantly depleting the resource.

In addition, up to 80% of the baseflow in our streams and rivers originates from groundwater, therefore:

- ◆ flow in all 2nd Order and larger streams in Michigan should be continually monitored (currently less than 3% of the State's perennial streams are continually monitored).
 - ◆ a statewide groundwater level monitoring network should be re-established.
 - ◆ to help quantify aquifer recharge, accurate records of precipitation should be maintained throughout the State.
- ◆ Our surface waters have traditionally been afforded more protection via legislation than have our subsurface waters.

The groundwaters of the State should be provided the same protection as the surface waters, as they are intrinsically linked and cannot be managed separately.

- ◆ Being a water rich State, we have never pushed for reduction in water consumption.

Promote the efficient use of water resources. Although the perception is that we have more than ample supplies of water all across Michigan, there are areas that experience water shortages. We, as citizens of Michigan, should show that we treat the resource with respect, and do not squander it.

- ◆ In addition, the resource should be managed in sound and practical ways so that groundwater is available in sufficient quantity and quality for all users, both now and for generations to come.

The membership of MWEA, MSAWWA and MRWA are fully committed to promoting wise groundwater use management throughout Michigan, and support the development of a comprehensive groundwater use policy.

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Approved by Michigan Section AWWA Board of Trustees – January 20, 2006
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