

Great Lakes Source Water Initiative: Protecting Drinking Water at its Source



Imagine a day without water. How would you go about your daily life? Care for your family? Run a business? Now imagine three days without water and recall that the City of Toledo and nearby areas in Ohio and Michigan found themselves in this exact situation in the summer of 2014 during a harmful algal bloom on Lake Erie. Earlier in 2014, and outside the Great

Lakes Basin, residents in a West Virginia community were without water for up to a week after chemicals were spilled into their source of drinking water, the Elk River. How can our Great Lakes communities address a seemingly endless array of risks to our water while also minding their budgetary bottom line?

The Source Water Initiative is part of the Commission's groundbreaking Blue Accounting program that will bring together water professionals from around the Great Lakes to promote shared, region-wide goals for protecting sources of drinking water. The Initiative will further develop recommended metrics for tracking progress toward the shared goals through available data sources with a keen eye toward filling gaps between existing regulatory systems. Ultimately, these efforts will deliver the right information to Great Lakes leaders through a web-based information platform; helping those leaders better set priorities and allocate resources.

Examining source water protection within the framework of the Blue Accounting program also presents as opportunity to provide services to local communities as an "incubator" for tracking watershed- or community-based efforts and coordinating those activities toward achievement of the shared goals. The Initiative will identify pilot areas within the Great Lakes basin, including one within the Western Lake Erie Basin, to test the incubator service through real-world application of Blue Accounting principles and seeks to produce results for public review in early 2018.

The Blue Accounting program is being developed through a partnership between the Great Lakes Commission and The Nature Conservancy, with cornerstone support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and additional support from The Erb Family Foundation, and The Joyce Foundation. Learn more about Blue Accounting at <http://BlueAccounting.org>.