Michigan Local Officials’ Views on Environmental Issues

Presented for the DEQ Speaker Series
May 10, 2018
Presentation Outline

• **Overview of the MPPS:** what it is and how it’s used

• **MPPS data on Michigan Environmental and Water Issues:**
  >> perceptions of the Great Lakes’ impact on local jurisdictions
  >> support for Great Lakes regulations and protection policies
  >> actions to address energy supply issues in Michigan
  >> appropriate division of authority on environmental and water quality policies
  >> drinking water in local communities:
    threats to water safety, the condition of infrastructure,
    challenges regarding shared local drinking water systems,
    funding sources, and governmental oversight
  >> local officials’ commitment to ‘green’ leadership
Background: The MPPS

- **A census survey** – all 1,856 Michigan counties, cities, villages, and townships.

- **Respondents** – chief elected and appointed officials

- **Administered** – online and via hardcopy

- **Topics** – wide range, such as fiscal health, budget priorities, public safety, economic development, intergovernmental cooperation, employee policies, planning and zoning, roads, environmental sustainability, citizen engagement, state-local relations, and much more.
MPPS is not a typical opinion poll

• 70+% response rates

• **Transparency**
  -- Questionnaires online
  -- Pre-run data tables online
  -- Sharing of (anonymized) datasets with other researchers

• **Expert advisors on questionnaire content**

• **Research partnership with Michigan local government associations**
  -- MAC, MML, & MTA

• **Borrowing from other proven sources such as NLC and ICMA**
What does the MPPS aim to do?

- **Improve understanding** of local government to help improve policymaking and quality of life.

- **Inform local leaders** about peers across the state: challenges and responses.

- **Inform state practitioners** and other stakeholders with data about local level challenges and responses not available from any other source.

- **Build a longitudinal data archive** to allow tracking of fundamental changes (such as the economic transition, aging population, etc.).

- Foster **academic research and teaching** on state and local government issues.
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    challenges regarding shared local drinking water systems,
    funding sources, and governmental oversight
  >> local officials’ commitment to ‘green’ leadership
>> perceptions of the Great Lakes’ impact on local jurisdictions
Who believes Great Lakes have impact on their jurisdiction?

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following general statement?… The Great Lakes have a significant impact on my jurisdiction. (Fall 2013)
Who believes Great Lakes are valuable local economic resource?

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following general statement?… The Great Lakes are a valuable economic resource for my jurisdiction. (Fall 2013)
Who believes their local policies don’t impact the Great Lakes?

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following general statement?… My jurisdiction's policies and operations do not impact the health of the Great Lakes. (Fall 2013)
Who believes their local policies don’t impact the Great Lakes?

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following general statement?… My jurisdiction's policies and operations do not impact the health of the Great Lakes. (Fall 2013)
>> Great Lakes regulations and protection policies
How do local officials think the Great Lakes are doing?

Q: First, thinking about the Great Lakes overall, would you rate their current condition as excellent, good, fair, poor, or very poor? (Fall 2013)
Who supports stronger regulations to protect the Great Lakes?

Q: In general, to what extent do you believe the following types of regulatory policies should be strengthened or eased? (Fall 2013)

- Strengthen regulations to limit water diversion
- Strengthen regulations on waste water systems' overflow release
- Strengthen regulations on runoff from farms and the agricultural sector
- Strengthen regulations on septic system inspections and maintenance
- Strengthen regulations on runoff from stormwater sewers and streets

![Bar chart showing responses to the question on regulatory policies.](chart.png)
Who supports additional policies to protect the Great Lakes?

Q: In general, to what extent do you support or oppose the following possible policies or actions related to the Great Lakes? (Fall 2013)

- **Increase efforts to improve Great Lakes water quality, even if it requires higher taxes**
  - Strongly oppose: 7%
  - Somewhat oppose: 20%
  - Somewhat support: 49%
  - Strongly support: 19%

- **Reduce the rate at which farmland or other natural areas are paved over, even if it limits economic development**
  - Strongly oppose: 6%
  - Somewhat oppose: 20%
  - Somewhat support: 41%
  - Strongly support: 26%

- **Increase coordination and role among local governments on Great Lakes management, even if it requires giving up some of my jurisdiction’s decision-making power**
  - Strongly oppose: 11%
  - Somewhat oppose: 22%
  - Somewhat support: 43%
  - Strongly support: 13%

- **Prevent new construction on wetlands, even if it limits economic development**
  - Strongly oppose: 9%
  - Somewhat oppose: 28%
  - Somewhat support: 36%
  - Strongly support: 21%

- **Increase coordination among regional states on Great Lakes management, even if it requires giving up some of Michigan’s decision-making power**
  - Strongly oppose: 12%
  - Somewhat oppose: 26%
  - Somewhat support: 40%
  - Strongly support: 14%

- **Phase out coal-fired power plants to reduce mercury emissions, even if the cost of electricity increases**
  - Strongly oppose: 15%
  - Somewhat oppose: 29%
  - Somewhat support: 33%
  - Strongly support: 12%

- **Increase the cost of water for households and businesses to encourage consumers to use less water**
  - Strongly oppose: 32%
  - Somewhat oppose: 39%
  - Somewhat support: 17%
  - Strongly support: 3%
Who supports efforts to improve Great Lakes water quality?

Q: In general, to what extent do you support or oppose... increased efforts to improve Great Lakes water quality, even if it requires higher taxes? (Fall 2013)
actions to address energy supply issues in Michigan
What should Michigan do to address energy supply?

Q: Next, we want to ask about a range of potential sources of energy. Although these issues can be complex and may have various costs and benefits, in general, to what extent do you support or oppose the following possible actions to address energy supply issues in Michigan? (Fall 2013)

- Increase the use of solar power
- Increase the use of hydroelectric power
- Increase the use of wind power on land
- Increase production and use of biomass and/or biofuels
- Increase the use of offshore wind power in the Great Lakes
- Increase the use of nuclear power
- Increase drilling for natural gas and oil through fracking
- Allow offshore oil and gas drilling in the Great Lakes
- Mandate expanded use of renewable energy through state law

[Bar chart showing percentages of support and opposition for each action.]

- Support: 86%
- Oppose: 7%
- Support: 82%
- Oppose: 6%
- Support: 79%
- Oppose: 16%
- Support: 72%
- Oppose: 12%
- Support: 69%
- Oppose: 24%
- Support: 57%
- Oppose: 31%
- Support: 45%
- Oppose: 36%
- Support: 37%
- Oppose: 55%
- Support: 44%
- Oppose: 45%
>> appropriate division of authority on environmental and water quality policies
Who is responsible for taking action to protect the Great Lakes?

Q: For each of the following entities, please indicate whether you think they should have a great deal of responsibility, some responsibility, or no responsibility for taking actions to protect the Great Lakes. (Fall 2013)

- **State governments**: 9% A Great Deal of Responsibility, 90% Some Responsibility
- **Federal governments**: 4% A Great Deal of Responsibility, 28% Some Responsibility, 66% No Responsibility
- **Businesses and industries**: 3% A Great Deal of Responsibility, 40% Some Responsibility, 56% No Responsibility
- **Individual citizens**: 6% A Great Deal of Responsibility, 57% Some Responsibility, 35% No Responsibility
- **Local governments**: 6% A Great Deal of Responsibility, 62% Some Responsibility, 30% No Responsibility
- **Your jurisdiction’s government in particular**: 6% A Great Deal of Responsibility, 28% Some Responsibility, 52% No Responsibility, 15% Don’t Know

Don’t Know | No Responsibility | Some Responsibility | A Great Deal of Responsibility
drinking water in local communities
How do Michigan jurisdictions provide drinking water?

Q: Some people get their drinking water through a shared water supply system (such as a municipal system, a subdivision-wide system, a shared system for a single apartment building, etc.). Others get drinking water from individual private wells. Which of the following best describes how drinking water is provided in your jurisdiction? (Spring 2016)

(excludes counties)
How do Michigan jurisdictions provide drinking water?
- by population size -

(excludes counties)
How do Michigan jurisdictions provide drinking water?

- by region -

(excludes counties)
Officials’ assessments of local drinking water problems (entirely wells)

Q: To what extent – if any – are each of the following currently problems for drinking water provision in your jurisdiction? (Spring 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threats to water source quality / safety</th>
<th>Inadequate volume / low water tables</th>
<th>Compliance with state and/or federal regulations</th>
<th>Presence of lead in on-premises plumbing (e.g., faucets, solder)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(among those with drinking water provided entirely by individual wells)
Officials’ assessments of local drinking water problems (shared systems)

Q: To what extent – if any – are each of the following currently problems for drinking water provision in your jurisdiction? (Spring 2016)

Aging / breaking pipes in the shared water supply system(s)

- A significant problem: 28%
- Somewhat of a problem: 29%
- Not much of a problem: 28%
- Not a problem at all: 6%
- Don't know: 3% (among those with shared water systems)

Threats to water source quality / safety

- A significant problem: 15%
- Somewhat of a problem: 35%
- Not much of a problem: 45%
- Not a problem at all: 3% (among those with shared water systems)

Compliance with state and/or federal regulations

- A significant problem: 8%
- Somewhat of a problem: 31%
- Not much of a problem: 55%
- Not a problem at all: 4% (among those with shared water systems)

Presence of lead in on-premises plumbing (e.g., faucets, solder)

- A significant problem: 8%
- Somewhat of a problem: 30%
- Not much of a problem: 46%
- Not a problem at all: 51% (among those with shared water systems)

Presence of lead in pipes connecting customer to the system(s)

- A significant problem: 7%
- Somewhat of a problem: 29%
- Not much of a problem: 13%
- Not a problem at all: 64% (among those with shared water systems)

Inadequate volume / low water tables

- A significant problem: 4%
- Somewhat of a problem: 27%
- Not much of a problem: 64%
- Not a problem at all: 3% (among those with shared water systems)
Assessments of drinking water infrastructure condition

Q: In your opinion, how would you rate the overall current condition of drinking water infrastructure (such as treatment plant, distribution pipes, etc.) in your jurisdiction? (Spring 2016)

(among those with a role in a shared water supply system)
Assessments of drinking water infrastructure condition
- by region -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper Peninsula</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Lower Peninsula</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Central</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Central</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(among those with a role in a shared water supply system)
Assessments of drinking water infrastructure condition

- by jurisdiction’s level of fiscal stress -

(among those with a role in a shared water supply system)
Concerns over funding for local water infrastructure

Q: Thinking about the current levels of funding for drinking water infrastructure in your jurisdiction, to what extent do you agree or disagree that current levels of funding are adequate to maintain / improve the drinking water infrastructure in your jurisdiction? (Spring 2016)

Current funding can maintain infrastructure: Strongly agree: 14%, Somewhat agree: 36%, Neither agree nor disagree: 18%, Somewhat disagree: 8%, Strongly disagree: 5%, Don't know: 20%

Current funding can improve infrastructure: Strongly agree: 10%, Somewhat agree: 25%, Neither agree nor disagree: 22%, Somewhat disagree: 17%, Strongly disagree: 6%, Don't know: 20%

(among those with a role in a shared water supply system)
Concerns over funding for local water infrastructure
- by current condition of infrastructure -

Current funding can **maintain** infrastructure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current funding can **improve** infrastructure:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(among those with a role in a shared water supply system)
Increased use of drinking water funding source

Q: Please indicate whether your jurisdiction uses each of the following options to fund drinking water, and whether or not each has been increased in the last few years? (Spring 2016)

- Water rates / user fees: 70%
- Bonds: 27%
- Federal / state grants: 29%
- Low-interest loans: 32%
- Special assessments: 21%
- General fund contributions: 32%

(among those with a role in a shared water supply system)
Recently increased water rates for drinking water

- by current condition of infrastructure -

(among those that indicate they use water rates/fees)
Officials’ assessments of cost as a local drinking water problem

Q: To what extent – if any – is affordability/delinquency on water bills currently a problem for drinking water provision in your jurisdiction? (Spring 2016)

(among those with shared water systems)
Officials’ assessments of cost as a local drinking water problem
- by current condition of infrastructure -

(among those with shared water systems)
Support for further increased water fees for infrastructure

Q: Looking ahead, in order to maintain or improve drinking water infrastructure in your jurisdiction, do you think the following groups or individuals would support or oppose increasing water rates or fees? (Spring 2016)

(among those with a role in a shared water supply system)
Officials’ own support for increased water fees
- by current condition of infrastructure -

(among those with a role in a shared water supply system)
local officials’ commitment to ‘green’ leadership
Support for “green” leadership in local government

Q: Do you agree or disagree that promoting environmental sustainability and the concept of “being green” are important aspects of local government leadership? (Fall 2010)
Takeaways

• Most local leaders statewide (60%) think that their jurisdictions’ policies do not impact the health of the Great Lakes, even those on the coasts.

• However, there is broad, bipartisan support for a wide variety of stronger water regulations and Great Lakes protection policies, even if there are costs to bear as a result.

• Local officials see the State as having most responsibility for protecting the Great Lakes, but even so, two-thirds of local officials believe their governments should have at least some responsibility.

• Statewide, 17% with shared water systems believe there are threats to the water quality or safety in their communities; so say 14% of where all drinking water is provided through individual private wells.

• Jurisdictions that report higher fiscal stress are significantly more likely to say the condition of their drinking water infrastructure is either fair or poor—37%.

• In jurisdictions where leaders say the water infrastructure is poor today, 72% say their current levels of funding are not adequate to maintain that infrastructure into the future—28% statewide.

• Overall, 70% believe that promoting environmental sustainability is an important aspect of local government leadership. Only 10% of local leaders disagree with this view.
The Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS)

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