

**STATE OF OHIO**  
**WATER CONSERVATION AND EFFICIENCY PROGRAM**  
**ANNUAL ASSESSMENT**

December 7, 2023

This Water Conservation and Efficiency Program Annual Assessment is submitted by the State of Ohio to the Compact Council pursuant to the requirements contained in Section 4.2.2 of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact (“the Compact”) and to the Regional Body pursuant to the commitments made in Article 304 of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement (“the Agreement”).

**1. Lead Agency.** The lead agency for Ohio’s water conservation and efficiency program is the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (“ODNR”). The primary contact person is Dena Barnhouse, Chief of the ODNR Division of Water Resources (“the Division”) (telephone: 614-265-6723, email: Dena.Barnhouse@dnr.ohio.gov). An additional contact person is Bradley Lodge, Manager of the Division’s Water Inventory and Planning Program (telephone: 614-265-6727, email: Bradley.Lodge@dnr.ohio.gov).

**2. Status of Ohio Goals and Objectives.** Ohio’s water conservation and efficiency goals are those contained in Section 4.2.1 of the Compact. Ohio’s water conservation and efficiency objectives have been developed and can be viewed online at [water conservation goals and objectives](#).

**3. Water Conservation and Efficiency Program Overview.** Ohio’s implementing laws, regulations and policies are contained in the Compact, codified in Ohio Revised Code (“ORC”) 1522.01, and its implementing provisions codified in ORC 1522.02–.40. ORC 1522.05 requires the Chief of the Division to adopt voluntary watershed-wide goals, objectives, and standards for water conservation and efficiency consistent with Section 4.2 of the Compact. ORC 1522.17 requires an applicant for a water withdrawal and consumptive use permit to submit a facility water conservation plan that, if it reasonably incorporates environmentally sound and economically feasible water conservation measures applicable to the facility, will be considered to be in compliance with Section 4.11.3 of the Compact.

All other elements of Ohio’s water conservation and efficiency program are voluntary, except those authorized by pre-existing statutes, regulations, or programs. The only state program that provides for mandatory water use reductions is the Ohio Emergency Management Agency’s Emergency Operations Plan (authorized by ORC 5502.22), and then only when the Governor declares a Level Four Drought Emergency. The Emergency Operations Plan-Drought Incident Annex can be viewed online at [Ohio Drought Incident Annex](#). The elements of Ohio’s voluntary program consist of education on the value of water conservation and efficiency and promotion of voluntary conservation activities. Such efforts are undertaken individually by state agencies pursuant to general education authorities and programs.

#### 4. Consistency with Regional Objectives

Objective	Program Element
Guide programs toward long-term sustainable water use	<p>A Water Inventory and Planning Program Visibility Outreach Initiative began its campaign to raise awareness about Ohio’s water use rules and regulations. Program staff are presenting at various agencies, advisory councils, and conservation districts to inform water users on the requirements of the Ohio Revised Code. The Initiative will improve the accuracy of Ohio’s water use data and aid in preventing potential water use conflicts.</p> <p>ODNR continued its ConServe Ohio State Park Sustainability Plan which is a call to action for park staff and visitors to implement sustainability practices across ODNr owned properties. Water conservation, including water use tracking, mitigation techniques, and updated infrastructure, is a key component of this plan. Required best management practices for manure management to improve water quality in the western Lake Erie Basin have been adopted in Ohio statute, which can be viewed online at <a href="#">ORC 939.08</a>. In addition, water quality management plans have been captured in Ohio’s Domestic Action Plan for Lake Erie and the H2Ohio program, and the plans are being implemented. The Ohio EPA is currently working to establish a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Program for the Western Lake Erie Basin.</p>
Adopt and implement supply and demand management to promote efficient use and conservation of water resources	<p>ODNR and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency are currently designing a comprehensive Ohio Water Study to assess current water infrastructure availability and project how both population and economic growth will impact Ohio’s water resources. Beginning with Central Ohio, the study will move region by region to provide a complete report for the State.</p> <p>ODNR continues to expand the Water Withdrawal Atlas on ODNr’s Webpage: The Atlas concisely summarizes data collected by ODNr to assist in answering commonly asked questions regarding water use and to promote conservation focused initiatives by providing a clearer understanding of how water is used in Ohio. Understanding these factors can inform conservation solutions for the entire state as well as localized initiatives that support communities and watersheds. The Atlas now includes a Lake Erie Basin-specific page detailing large scale water use throughout the Lake Erie Watershed.</p>
Improve monitoring and standardize data reporting among state and provincial water conservation and efficiency programs	<p>Annual water use information for registered withdrawals continues to be collected, analyzed, and reported for the various water use sectors.</p> <p>A new online water-use reporting application rolled out in 2023 allowing registered facilities easy access to their reporting history and furthered the water user’s ability to track their own water conservation practices. Accuracy of registrations and annual reporting has increased exponentially in just one year and will continue for years to come.</p> <p>An online Facility Locator is in progress that will allow for water users or interested parties to view the location of registered facilities, and all historic water use.</p>
Develop science, technology, and research	<p>Technical assistance continues to be provided to USGS and Ohio EPA for a Glacial Aquifer Groundwater Study in northwest Ohio. The Geologic Characterization Study is complete with anticipated publication in December 2023. This study will aid in producing a Flow Model of the “Michindoh” aquifer in the tri-state area.</p> <p>ODNR is working with the Ohio Department of Development to install additional groundwater observation wells in Northwest Ohio to further our understanding of the Aquifers in the region.</p>
Develop education programs and information sharing for all water users	<p>Current water conservation and efficiency education programs continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide an online forum for submitting input from water withdrawal facility managers on best management practices and conservation and efficiency initiatives.</li> <li>Provide updated material conveniently accessible to the public containing information on water conservation and efficiency; the water conservation webpage can be viewed online on ODNr’s Compact webpage under <a href="#">Water Conservation and Efficiency Webpage</a>.</li> </ul> <p>Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) Educator’s workshops were conducted by Ohio EPA. These workshops include water conservation as part of the curriculum.</p>

Objective	Program Element
	<p>The H2Ohio Program administered by Ohio EPA, Ohio Department of Agriculture and the ODNR is a comprehensive, data-driven water quality plan to reduce harmful algal blooms, improve wastewater infrastructure, and prevent lead contamination. Besides water quality conservation-based projects, education and information about conservation practices, wetlands, and more can be found at the H2Ohio website: <a href="#">Ohio Department of Natural Resources   H2Ohio</a></p> <p>The ODNR H2Ohio water quality effort has also enlisted a group of researchers from various universities that will assess the effectiveness and future role of implemented and planned wetland restoration projects. The Lake Erie and Aquatic Research Network (LEARN) will share data, information, and educational resources throughout this effort.</p>

**5. Program Implementation Timeline and Status.** Ohio's Water Conservation and Efficiency Program, continues to be implemented as described above.