

A Sustainable Watershed Funding Strategy for Michigan

Public Opinion Poll

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**PUBLIC SECTOR
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Executive Summary

Water resources are inseparable from Michigan's identity. They define our state geographically, fuel Michiganders' love of outdoor recreation, and are integral to our economy in numerous ways, from agriculture to tourism and manufacturing sectors. Watershed management is a collaborative, comprehensive process to assess conditions and implement land-use and water management practices for protecting and improving the quality and quantity of the water and other natural resources within a watershed. While the watershed management process seeks to develop sustainable management solutions, a sustainable source of funding to support these activities does not currently exist in Michigan. To address this problem, partners in West Michigan are working to develop a source of sustainable funding to support watershed management in Michigan's communities.

After researching alternative funding approaches and conducting a robust community conversation process, watershed groups in West Michigan reached consensus to advance a policy proposal to raise funding for watershed management purposes. Under the proposed approach, residents would have the option of donating additional funding through their property taxes to a local water-quality fund that would support watershed management activities in their community. While funds would be collected through local taxes, they would be passed through to regional planning entities that would administer funds on a watershed scale under the guidance of watershed advisory councils.

To assess the viability of the proposal, Public Sector Consultants (PSC) conducted a public opinion poll to assess Michiganders' perception of water quality conditions, willingness to donate, and potential donation levels. The survey sample included registered voters who own their own home that would be eligible to participate in the program. The survey results confirm that Michiganders highly value water quality and are willing to support it financially. For example:

- 85 percent of Michiganders indicate that water quality was important to them.
- 81 percent of Michiganders agree that we need to invest in our waters.
- 60 percent of Michiganders are supportive of the proposed funding approach, even if they wouldn't donate personally. Only 25 percent were unsupportive. The remainder were undecided.
- 35 percent of Michiganders are willing to donate additional funding to local water-quality funds through their property taxes.
- 90 percent of those willing to donate indicated they would be willing to contribute between \$25 and \$75, with a median of \$50. Based on these participation rates and the median donation amount, as much as \$47.6 million could be generated annually.
- There is greater support to collect and administer the funding at a more local level rather than statewide.
- Reducing pollution that enters lakes, rivers, and streams, as well as protecting sources of drinking water are the most important areas of investment for Michiganders.

The survey results confirm that the funding proposal could generate substantial revenue to enhance, restore, and protect Michigan's lakes, rivers, and streams. Developing a new sustainable funding mechanism to support watershed management will require a substantial amount of effort in designing a successful program and shepherding new legislation through the Michigan Legislature. Project partners will need to continue to engage stakeholders, refine and further develop the framework, collect additional information, and develop supporting materials that will position the effort for success. These steps are outlined in the 2017 report, *West Michigan Sustainable Watershed Funding Strategy*.

Background

The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (Alliance) formed in 2014 and is comprised of leaders from the government, business, education, philanthropic, and nonprofit sectors across the 13-county West Michigan region. The organization came together in response to Michigan’s Regional Prosperity Initiative—a voluntary initiative that supports greater regional collaboration to enhance the vibrancy of Michigan and its communities.

The Alliance serves as a forum to identify and develop initiatives that advance regional prosperity in West Michigan. Through this process, the need to develop sustainable funding mechanisms to enhance, protect, and preserve water resources was identified as a top priority.

In 2015, the Alliance provided funding, administered through the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council (MACC), to evaluate funding mechanisms that could provide sustainable funding for watershed management. The MACC, in coordination with the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission and the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council, formed a project team to lead this effort. The group then convened the West Michigan Watershed Collaborative to provide input on the project. The collaborative includes representatives from over 25 watershed organizations within the region, with an ongoing goal of encouraging and facilitating greater collaboration at the regional scale.

The project team held several meetings with the West Michigan Watershed Collaborative to provide project updates and receive feedback to guide the project outcomes. The group compiled a comprehensive summary of the watershed management plans and financial needs of various organizations in the West Michigan Watershed Collaborative. The resulting *West Michigan Watershed Summary* is available on the Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds’ website¹ and will be continually updated as watershed management plans are written or revised. This summary and estimate of financial needs helped to inform the development of funding mechanisms.

PSC was hired to assist the team evaluate alternative funding mechanisms that have the potential to generate sustainable funding—which are summarized in the 2016 report, *A New Approach to Fund Watershed Management: An Evaluation of Funding Mechanisms*.

In 2017, the Alliance provided additional resources to engage members of the community to discuss the alternative approaches and further develop a strategy to implement a sustainable funding mechanism to support watershed management. The project team reengaged PSC to assist with community engagement to develop a sustainable watershed funding strategy. Through a series of community meetings and robust dialogue, partners reached consensus on an actionable strategy which is summarized in the 2017 report, *West Michigan Sustainable Watershed Funding Strategy*.

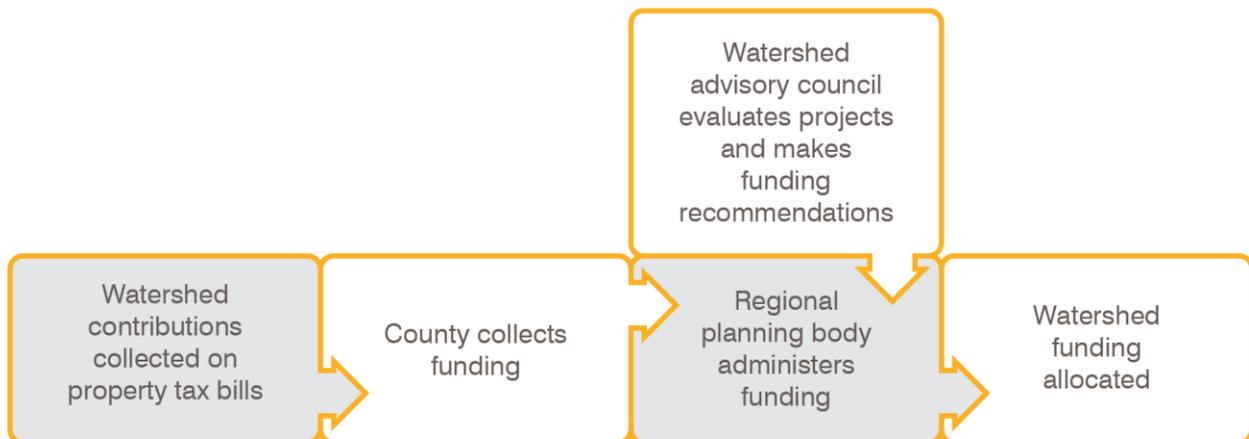
¹ To view the *West Michigan Watershed Summary*, visit <https://www.lgrow.org/rpi/>.

A Framework for Sustainable Watershed Funding

In the current political environment, project partners determined that it would be undesirable, and likely unsuccessful, to pursue additional watershed funding through tax increases. This philosophy drove the decision to advance an approach that would enable counties to collect a voluntary contribution from property owners through the tax bill. Funding would be administered through existing regional planning bodies to leverage existing administrative structures and better enable work to be conducted at a watershed scale, which does not adhere to political boundaries. Partners throughout the state will need to identify the regional entities best suited to serve in this capacity at the local level to ensure that every watershed in Michigan is included in the. This framework will require new legislation to enable counties to implement the funding program and provide operational guidelines on how programs may be structured. Because this framework would require new statewide legislation, it needs to provide enough flexibility that it can be tailored to meet the needs of the entire state.

Michigan's regions vary significantly in terms of watershed conditions, land-use features, population, economic wellbeing, organizational structure and capacity, community priorities, and many other factors. Rather than dictating a one-size-fits-all approach for all of Michigan's regions, the framework delegates decision making to the regional level for many critical elements of the program design so that the funding and implementation approach can be tailored to the unique conditions of Michigan's regions. Watershed advisory councils would be formed to guide funding decisions that reflect regional watershed priorities. Watershed councils that already exist could also serve in this role (see Exhibit 1 for the funding structure).

EXHIBIT 1. Local Water Quality Donation Fund Structure



Key elements of the proposed funding model and a rationale for each are provided below.

- **Enable counties to collect a voluntary watershed contribution through property tax bills.**

Rationale: Rather than establishing a new administrative framework, using the existing property tax collection system would streamline efforts, decrease costs, and may increase participation.

- **Require counties to pass funding through to an existing regional planning body.**

Rationale: Operating through existing regional planning bodies would leverage existing decision-making and administrative frameworks, which would decrease administrative burden and expenses. Regional bodies are accustomed to facilitating conversations among their member jurisdictions regarding contribution levels and allocations of funding. Furthermore, regional planning bodies are well equipped to address watershed issues, especially those that span multiple communities.

- **Require regional planning bodies to establish one or more watershed advisory councils that would guide funding allocations.**

Rationale: Watershed advisory councils that include representatives of organizations involved in the development and implementation of watershed management plans would be well suited to prioritize projects. Each region would be able to determine whether it would establish one advisory council guiding all decisions for watersheds within its jurisdiction or multiple councils at a watershed scale that is appropriate for the region. Furthermore, in some regions, existing watershed councils may be well positioned to serve in this role. This approach provides watershed groups the ability to inform funding decisions while providing accountability through an existing governmental organization.

- **Enable regional planning bodies to enter into cooperative agreements with each other to enhance coordination of efforts and fill capacity where needed.** These cooperative agreements may include assigning fiduciary responsibilities to another regional planning body.

Rationale: Regional planning bodies are well suited to operate on a watershed scale because they are accustomed to planning across multiple jurisdictions. In instances where watersheds cross regional boundaries or when a region may need additional capacity, multiple regions could partner to administer watershed funding through cooperative agreements.

- **Enable regional planning bodies, in coordination with member counties to tailor the initiative to suit Michigan’s varying interests.** The following elements would be determined by each region.

- A voluntary program could be structured as either an opt-in or an opt-out system. Regional planning bodies and counties are well suited to determine the structure that will fit their goals.
- A voluntary watershed contribution as well as county and regional administrative expenses should be capped at a specified rate (yet to be determined). Regions and counties would be able to determine the rates up to the cap that would be appropriate for their constituents.
- Funding allocations dedicated to each county and watershed as well as allocations dedicated to on-the-ground projects and staff support should be determined at the regional level to meet the unique needs of the watersheds in the region.
- Watershed management can be conducted at a wide range of scales. Regions are well suited to evaluate the scale at which programs should be implemented to reflect social dynamics and existing organizational structures.

Rationale: Michigan’s regions and watersheds are unique and vary significantly in terms of watershed conditions, land-use features, population, economic wellbeing, organizational structure and capacity, community priorities, and many other factors. Enabling regions to tailor the initiative to fit their needs will better position the success of the initiative at both a regional and statewide basis. There are simply too many considerations to dictate a one-size-fits-all approach.

Public Opinion Survey

Public opinion surveys provide a relatively low-cost method to understand the public's perspective on a topic. Through the method, a representative sample can be collected in a timely and cost-efficient manner and extrapolated to a broader population. PSC, in coordination with the project team, developed a survey to assess public perception of the funding proposal, with three broad goals:

- Assess how receptive Michiganders are to the approach
- Understand how much Michiganders are willing to donate
- Assess how additional funding should be invested

Since the project team is evaluating pursuing new enabling legislation, the survey was limited to registered voters because the perspectives of that cohort of residents may be more meaningful to lawmakers. Furthermore, because the funding proposal would enable property owners to donate through their property tax bill, a screening question was used to limit the survey to people who own their home.

Surveys that assess willingness to pay, or in this case, donate, have some limitations. Respondents do not perfectly predict their behavior in the future or translate a hypothetical scenario with actually opening their wallet. PSC adjusted for this by including two additional questions. After being asked whether they would donate, respondents were asked the amount of money they would be willing to donate, which allows the participant to articulate how much they would be comfortable contributing. Second, respondents were asked a follow-up question about the level of certainty the participants felt about their willingness to donate and the amount they specified. Sample participants who were less certain, but willing to donate, can then be given less power in the estimation of the total willingness to donate of the entire sample. Similarly, when combining support for the new law, willingness to donate, and certainty, we can be fairly confident that that portion of the sample and the larger population of Michigan would be willing to financially support watershed management. Additional details regarding the survey methodology are provided in Appendix A.

Key Findings

The survey demonstrates that water quality is important to Michiganders and they believe that investments are needed. Furthermore, Michiganders are receptive to the proposed law that would give people the option of donating through their property taxes, even if they would not personally donate through the program. Finally, the survey results demonstrate that substantial funding could be generated if the funding strategy was implemented. Below is a summary of the key findings from the survey. Complete survey results are provided in Appendix B.

Michiganders Support the Proposal

In Michigan, 60 percent of property owners are supportive of a program that gives people the option of donating additional money to a local water-quality fund through their property taxes. Whereas 25 percent were unsupportive, and 15 percent were neutral or unsure of their support. Respondents were asked to identify the political party that most aligns with their view. Further analysis demonstrates that support extends across the political spectrum, with 68 percent of Democrats, 66 percent of independents, and 55 percent of Republicans expressing support of the program.

Respondents were asked if they would be more or less likely to donate through state taxes or local taxes. The results demonstrate that there is greater support for structuring the program so that funding is retained at a more local level. The survey shows that 37 percent of Michiganders would be less likely to donate if funding was collected by the State of Michigan whereas 25 percent would be more likely to do so; 32 percent of respondents indicated that it would not affect their participation and 5 percent were undecided. Assessing demographic factors demonstrates that people who identify as Democrats are split evenly between state and local funding: one third were more likely to donate at a local level, one third were more likely to donate at the state level, and one third indicate it would not affect their willingness to participate. However, this element of the proposed policy becomes more significant to people who identify as Republicans. Only 22 percent of Republicans would be more likely to donate if the funding went to the state, 34 percent were unchanged, and 40 percent were less likely to donate through state taxes.

Donation Levels

To better understand potential participation rates, the survey assessed how many Michiganders who own property would be willing to donate and how much of a donation they would be willing to make. Approximately 35 percent of property owners indicated that they would be willing to donate to a local water quality fund through their property tax bill; 25 percent were neutral, and 37 percent were unwilling to donate. A relatively small percentage (3 percent) of respondents declined to answer the question.

Building from this question, respondents who were willing to donate or undecided were asked how much they would be willing to contribute. Of those who said they were supportive of the new law, and willing to donate, 90 percent of the donation amounts ranged between \$23.23 and \$76.77; the median donation amount was exactly \$50.

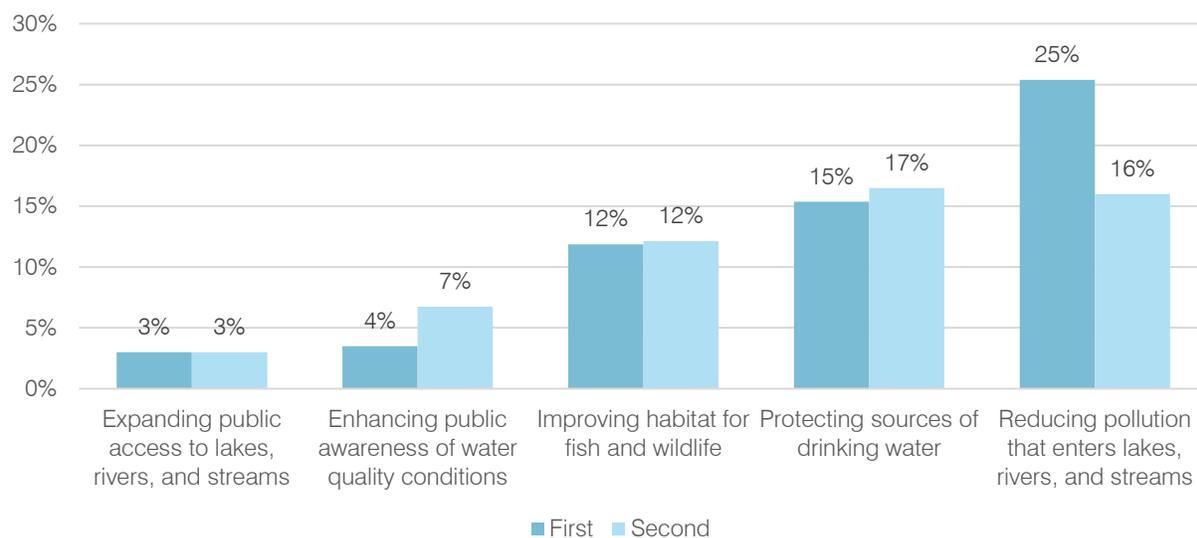
Information from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that there are approximately 2.8 million owner-occupied households in Michigan. If willingness to donate rates aligned with those identified through the survey at the median donation amount, Michigan could generate as much as \$47.6 million annually to support watershed management in the state.²

Investment Priorities

Respondents were asked to identify their top two priorities from a series of choices for how additional funding should be allocated. The results should inform efforts of the project team as it pursues legislation and refines the program structure of eligible funding allocations. Michiganders believe that funding should be prioritized to reduce pollution that enters lakes, rivers and streams; followed by protecting sources of drinking water; and improving habitat for fish and wildlife. Enhancing public awareness of water-quality conditions and expanding public access were a lower priority. Only 1.5 percent of respondents indicated that there were other priorities that were more important than any of the options provided; 2.5 percent declined to answer the question or said they did not know. Michiganders' funding priorities are depicted in exhibit 2.

² The U.S. Census estimates that there are 3,888,646 households in Michigan. The owner occupancy rate is 71 percent. PSC used these figures to calculate watershed funding rates using the 34.5 percent participate rate identified through the survey.

EXHIBIT 2. Michiganders' Water Quality Fund Investment Priorities



Underlying Considerations

The survey included a series of prompts to gauge Michiganders' perception of other factors that have the potential to affect support for the proposed policy and participation rates. The order of the questions was randomized for each respondent to ensure the order of the questions did not affect the results.

Michiganders care about water quality: These results confirm that Michiganders highly value Michigan's waters. An overwhelming majority of respondents (85 percent) disagreed with a statement that water quality was *not* important to them. This question was asked with a negative frame to ensure that respondents were reflecting on the questions before responding. The survey reveals that Michigan's waters are an important recreational asset for the state; 70 percent agree or strongly agree that they enjoy using lakes, rivers, and streams for recreation, 12 percent were neutral, and only 15 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.³ Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of Michiganders (81 percent) believe that investment in the quality of Michigan's lakes, rivers, and streams is needed; 8 percent were neutral, and only 10 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.⁴

Community priorities: Michigan and its communities have many priorities that compete for limited funding. To better understand the relative priority of water quality investments, respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree that other community needs are a higher priority. The survey shows that approximately 30 percent of Michiganders believe that water quality is a higher priority than other community needs that could receive public funding, 37 percent indicated that other priorities were more important, and 27 percent neither agreed nor disagreed.

³ Approximately 3 percent of respondents declined to answer this question or indicated they did not know.

⁴ Approximately 2 percent of respondents declined to answer this question or indicated they did not know. Responses to this question do not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Ability to donate: One of the primary factors that could affect Michiganders’ willingness to donate to a water-quality fund is whether they have room in their household budget to contribute. The survey shows that approximately 45 percent of Michiganders self-report as having the financial means to donate, 15 percent were neutral, and 38 percent indicated they do not have the means to donate.

Public education needs: While this survey provides useful context for Michiganders’ receptiveness to a program that would enable property owners to donate to a local water quality fund through their property taxes, the policy proposal will inevitably be more complex than can be articulated in a short telephone survey. To better understand this aspect, respondents were asked whether they needed more information before they would be willing to donate. A majority of respondents (57 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that they would need more information. Only 11 percent of respondents were neutral, 30 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 2 percent did not know or declined to answer the question. Because of the importance of public understanding of the proposal, and the response rate, additional analysis was conducted to better understand these results.

PSC analyzed the demographics characteristics of respondents that indicated they were supportive of the policy proposal but were unsure of whether they would donate and wanted more information to decide. This analysis revealed that Michiganders from all walks of life indicate that they would want additional information before deciding to donate—party affiliation, race/ethnicity, and educational attainment had no bearing on the desire for additional information. The biggest differentiating factor was age. People who are over 50 years old were more likely to indicate that they needed additional information. As a result, this cohort may be an especially important group to focus on for education and outreach efforts.

Trust in local government: One of the central decision points in crafting the proposed policy is deciding which entities will receive and administer donations made by property owners. The proposal advanced by the West Michigan Watershed Collaborative calls for funds to be collected by counties and passed through to regional planning bodies which would administer the funds under the direction of watershed advisory councils. Unfortunately, the nuances of this approach are complicated to assess through a simple telephone survey. Thus, trust in county government was used as a proxy for the proposed approach. The survey assessed the extent to which Michiganders believed that counties would administer the funds wisely. The results show that 33 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that counties would be trusted stewards of the funding; 18 percent were neutral, and 47 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that counties would manage donations wisely.⁵ While Michiganders may have some distrust for county government, there was still a strong preference for funds to be collected at the local rather than statewide level. When developing and implementing the funding proposal, the project team may need to focus its efforts to communicate how local watershed groups would guide funding decisions to help address this concern.

⁵ Approximately 3 percent of respondents declined to answer this question or indicated they did not know. Responses to this question do not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Conclusion

Watershed organizations in West Michigan are working to develop sources of sustainable funding to enhance, protect, and restore the state's lakes, rivers, and streams. Through a consensus-driven process, partners are advancing a policy that would give residents the option of voluntarily donating additional funding through their property taxes. This approach was developed using a pragmatic philosophy that recognizes the unlikelihood of generating additional funding through taxes to support watershed management.

The project team conducted a survey of property owners, which will be eligible to participate in the program, to assess how receptive Michiganders would be to the approach, and how much Michiganders would be willing to donate. The survey confirms that water quality is a high priority for Michiganders, and a significant number of property owners would be willing to donate to local water quality funds. In total, the proposal could generate as much as \$47.6 million annually that could be invested in Michigan's lakes, rivers, and streams. This figure may be on the higher end of potential funding that could be generated because actual participation rates and donation levels would likely vary based on program design and public outreach efforts to enroll people in the program. Despite this factor, the survey demonstrates that the proposed funding approach could be a viable source of sustainable funding to enhance, protect, and restore water quality in Michigan.

Next Steps

The 2017 report *West Michigan Sustainable Watershed Funding Strategy* identified a series of implementation steps that would be necessary to continue to advance the policy proposal. In addition to those elements, PSC recommends that the project team review the funding proposal and the survey results with watershed organizations throughout the state that are likely to have similar funding needs and be supportive of efforts to develop sources of sustainable funding. This feedback should be used to refine and further develop the framework to ensure that it is supported by watershed groups throughout Michigan.

References

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Appendix A: Survey Methodology

The survey was implemented from July 22, 2019 to July 30, 2019 and collected 800 responses from registered voters across Michigan. At least one response was collected from 76 of the 83 counties in Michigan. Respondents represent a sample of Michigan voters approximating the racial and ethnic makeup of the state, as well as the geographic distribution of the state's population. Results were not weighted because the survey was limited to registered voters and property owners, which inherently limits the range of demographic characteristics necessary to adjust for. The statewide findings have a margin of error of +/- 3%.

Appendix B: Watershed Funding Survey Results

This appendix lists each of the questions that was included in the Watershed Funding Survey distributed for the report. Frequency tables for each question are listed under the question itself.

1. The first question I'm going to ask is designed to make sure we're reaching a representative sample of Michigan's population. Do you own or rent your residence?

	Frequency	Percent
I own my home	800	100.0
I rent my home	0	0.0
Total	800	100.0

Note: This question was used to focus the survey on property owners who would be eligible to participate in the proposed watershed funding program.

2. In your community, how would you rate the overall quality of the lakes, rivers, and streams?

	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	117	14.6
Good	325	40.6
Average	233	29.1
Poor	94	11.8
Don't know	28	3.5
Refused	3	0.4
Total	800	100.0

3. Statewide, how would you rate the overall quality of the lakes, rivers, and streams?

	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	81	10.1
Good	323	40.4
Average	270	33.8
Poor	71	8.9
Don't know	52	6.5
Refused	3	0.4
Total	800	100.0

4. The West Michigan Watershed Collaborative is working to enable people to donate money to enhance, protect, and restore lakes, rivers, and streams in their own communities through their property tax bill. If adopted, nobody would be required to pay, but homeowners would be able to choose whether they want to donate additional money to a local water-quality fund, administered by county government. How supportive or unsupportive would you be of a law that gave people this option?

	Frequency	Percent
Very supportive	202	25.3
Somewhat supportive	279	34.9
Neither supportive nor unsupportive	81	10.1
Somewhat unsupportive	83	10.4
Very unsupportive	113	14.1
Don't know	34	4.3
Refused	8	1.0
Total	800	100.0

5. There are many potential ways that a local water-quality fund could be used. Of the following choices, pick the two you consider top priorities for additional investment.

First Choice:

	Frequency	Percent
Expanding public access to lakes, rivers, and streams	38	4.8
Improving habitat for fish and wildlife	147	18.4
Protecting sources of drinking water	202	25.3
Enhancing public awareness of water quality conditions	59	7.4
Reducing pollution that enters lakes, rivers, and streams	322	40.3
None of the above	12	1.5
Refused/don't know	20	2.5
Missing	0	0.0
Total	800	100.0

Second Choice:

	Frequency	Percent
Expanding public access to lakes, rivers, and streams	37	4.6
Improving habitat for fish and wildlife	192	24.0
Protecting sources of drinking water	195	24.4
Enhancing public awareness of water quality conditions	103	12.9
Reducing pollution that enters lakes, rivers, and streams	162	20.3
None of the above	0	0.0

	Frequency	Percent
Refused/don't know	79	9.9
Missing	32	4.0
Total	800	100.0

Aggregate:

	Frequency	Percent
Expanding public access to lakes, rivers, and streams	75	4.7
Improving habitat for fish and wildlife	339	21.2
Protecting sources of drinking water	397	24.8
Enhancing public awareness of water quality conditions	162	10.1
Reducing pollution that enters lakes, rivers, and streams	484	30.3
None of the above	12	0.8
Refused/don't know	99	6.2
Missing	32	2.0
Total	1600	100.0

Note: A total of 1600 respondents represents the first and second choices for investment priorities.

6. On a scale of one to five, with one being very unwilling and five being very willing, how willing would you be to donate money to a local water quality fund through your property tax bill if you had the option?

	Frequency	Percent
Very unwilling	153	19.1
Unwilling	142	17.8
Neither willing nor unwilling	204	25.5
Willing	183	22.9
Very willing	93	11.6
Refused	25	3.1
Total	800	100.0

7. Of those individuals that were neither willing nor unwilling, willing, or very willing—How much would you be willing to donate through your property taxes on an annual basis to a water-quality fund for your community's lakes, rivers, and streams?

Dollars	Frequency	Percent	Dollars	Frequency	Percent
0	19	4.0	75	3	0.6
0.05	1	0.2	96	1	0.2
1	1	0.2	100	73	15.2

Dollars	Frequency	Percent	Dollars	Frequency	Percent
3	2	0.4	120	4	0.8
5	10	2.1	150	4	0.8
10	18	3.8	200	13	2.7
15	2	0.4	250	2	0.4
19.97	1	0.2	400	1	0.2
20	21	4.4	500	3	0.6
25	18	3.8	600	1	0.2
30	4	0.8	1,000	2	0.4
35	1	0.2	1,200	1	0.2
50	61	12.7	1,500	1	0.2
56.32	1	0.2	Don't know	192	40.0
60	1	0.2	Refused	17	3.5
65	1	0.2	Total	480	100.0

Note: Percentages were calculated using the 480 individuals eligible to answer the question

8. How certain are you that you would donate ___ dollar(s) per year to a local water-quality fund?/would not donate to a local water-quality fund?

	Frequency	Percent
Very certain	230	28.8
Fairly certain	347	43.4
Fairly uncertain	114	14.3
Very uncertain	85	10.6
Don't know	19	2.4
Refused	5	0.6
Total	800	100.0

9. Would you be more or less likely to donate through your state taxes rather than your local taxes?

	Frequency	Percent
Less likely	292	36.5
Unchanged	255	31.9
More likely	207	25.9
Don't know	38	4.8
Refused	8	1.0
Total	800	100.0

10. Please tell us if you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements that may affect your willingness to donate to a local water fund through your property tax bill:

a. The quality of Michigan’s lakes, rivers, and streams is not important to me.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	31	3.9
Agree	52	6.5
Neither agree nor disagree	30	3.8
Disagree	253	31.6
Strongly disagree	423	52.9
Don't know	7	0.9
Refused	4	0.5
Total	800	100.0

b. Other community needs are a higher priority.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	96	12.0
Agree	200	25.0
Neither agree nor disagree	217	27.1
Disagree	168	21.0
Strongly disagree	70	8.8
Don't know	35	4.4
Refused	14	1.8
Total	800	100.0

c. I have the financial means to donate.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	96	12.0
Agree	262	32.8
Neither agree nor disagree	116	14.5
Disagree	157	19.6
Strongly disagree	148	18.5
Don't know	11	1.4
Refused	10	1.3
Total	800	100.0

d. I need more information to decide.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	187	23.4
Agree	268	33.5
Neither agree nor disagree	86	10.8
Disagree	135	16.9
Strongly disagree	105	13.1
Don't know	17	2.1
Refused	2	0.3
Total	800	100.0

e. I trust the county will manage the donations wisely.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	55	6.9
Agree	210	26.3
Neither agree nor disagree	142	17.8
Disagree	205	25.6
Strongly disagree	168	21.0
Don't know	19	2.4
Refused	1	0.1
Total	800	100.0

f. We need to invest in the quality of Michigan's lakes, rivers, and streams.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	314	39.3
Agree	336	42.0
Neither agree nor disagree	60	7.5
Disagree	51	6.4
Strongly disagree	27	3.4
Don't know	8	1.0
Refused	4	0.5
Total	800	100.0

g. I enjoy using lakes, rivers, and streams for recreational purposes.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	311	38.9
Agree	248	31.0
Neither agree nor disagree	98	12.3
Disagree	81	10.1
Strongly disagree	41	5.1
Don't know	14	1.8
Refused	7	0.9
Total	800	100.0

11. What is your gender?

	Frequency	Percent
Male	372	46.5
Female	416	52.0
Nonbinary	0	0.0
Don't know	7	0.9
Refused	5	0.6
Total	800	100

12. In what year were you born?

By Year:

Year	Frequency	Percent	Year	Frequency	Percent
1922	1	0.1	1964	16	2.0
1923	2	0.3	1965	15	1.9
1924	1	0.1	1966	8	1.0
1926	3	0.4	1967	10	1.3
1927	1	0.1	1968	13	1.6
1928	4	0.5	1969	16	2.0
1929	2	0.3	1970	7	0.9
1930	8	1.0	1971	9	1.1
1931	2	0.3	1972	7	0.9
1932	5	0.6	1973	6	0.8
1933	4	0.5	1974	3	0.4
1934	7	0.9	1975	5	0.6
1935	9	1.1	1976	5	0.6

Year	Frequency	Percent	Year	Frequency	Percent
1936	10	1.3	1977	5	0.6
1937	10	1.3	1978	7	0.9
1938	10	1.3	1979	7	0.9
1939	10	1.3	1980	7	0.9
1940	7	0.9	1981	6	0.8
1941	12	1.5	1982	5	0.6
1942	10	1.3	1983	8	1.0
1943	17	2.1	1984	4	0.5
1944	16	2.0	1985	22	2.8
1945	14	1.8	1986	14	1.8
1946	9	1.1	1987	17	2.1
1947	18	2.3	1988	9	1.1
1948	27	3.4	1989	6	0.8
1949	9	1.1	1990	7	0.9
1950	15	1.9	1991	3	0.4
1951	21	2.6	1992	4	0.5
1952	14	1.8	1993	4	0.5
1953	36	4.5	1994	7	0.9
1954	25	3.1	1995	2	0.3
1955	24	3.0	1996	5	0.6
1956	18	2.3	1997	1	0.1
1957	21	2.6	1998	3	0.4
1958	16	2.0	1999	1	0.1
1959	18	2.3	2000	2	0.3
1960	19	2.4	Don't know, but at least 18 years old	3	0.4
1961	12	1.5	Refused, but at least 18 years old	20	2.5
1962	22	2.8	Refused	0	0.0
1963	12	1.5	Total	800	100.0

By Age Group:

	Frequency	Percent
18–34	107	13.4
35–64	331	41.4
65+	339	42.4
Refused	23	2.9
Total	800	100.0

13. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?

	Frequency	Percent
Did not graduate high school	19	2.4
High-school graduate/GED	176	22
Some college, not yet graduated	148	18.5
Trade school/apprenticeships	15	1.9
Associate's degree	79	9.9
Bachelor's degree	189	23.6
Master's, graduate, or professional degree (MD, DDS, JD, DVM, PhD)	146	18.3
Don't know	6	0.8
Refused	22	2.8
Total	800	100.0

14. What is your annual household income from all sources?

	Frequency	Percent
Less than \$15,000	53	6.6
\$15,000 to \$24,999	47	5.9
\$25,000 to \$34,999	60	7.5
\$35,000 to \$49,999	92	11.5
\$50,000 to \$74,999	111	13.9
\$75,000 to \$99,999	86	10.8
\$100,000 to \$149,999	97	12.1
\$150,000 or more	61	7.6
Don't know	31	3.9
Refused	162	20.3
Total	800	100.0

15. What is your race or ethnicity?

	Frequency	Percent
American Indian or Alaskan Native	11	1.4
Asian or Pacific Islander	3	0.4
Black or African American	127	15.9
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	18	2.3
White, non-Hispanic	552	69.0
Multiracial	19	2.4
Other	30	3.8
Don't know	3	0.4
Refused	37	4.6
Total	800	100.0

16. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself to be a Republican or Democrat? (If Democrat) Would you consider yourself a strong Democrat or not a very strong Democrat? (If Independent) Would you consider yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party? (If Republican) Would you consider yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?

	Frequency	Percent
Strong Democrat	205	25.6
Not strong Democrat	82	10.3
Independent-Lean Democrat	40	5.0
Independent	76	9.5
Independent-Lean Republican	25	3.1
Not strong Republican	72	9.0
Strong Republican	146	18.3
Other	42	5.3
Don't know	22	2.8
Refused	90	11.3
Total	800	100.0

17. County

County	Frequency	Percent	County	Frequency	Percent
Allegan	11	1.4	Lapeer	3	0.4
Alpena	2	0.3	Leelanau	4	0.5
Antrim	1	0.1	Lenawee	6	0.8
Baraga	1	0.1	Livingston	17	2.1
Barry	5	0.6	Mackinac	2	0.3
Bay	5	0.6	Macomb	57	7.1

County	Frequency	Percent	County	Frequency	Percent
Benzie	3	0.4	Manistee	5	0.6
Berrien	18	2.3	Marquette	6	0.8
Branch	6	0.8	Mason	1	0.1
Calhoun	12	1.5	Mecosta	3	0.4
Cass	5	0.6	Menominee	4	0.5
Charlevoix	1	0.1	Midland	5	0.6
Cheboygan	3	0.4	Missaukee	1	0.1
Chippewa	1	0.1	Monroe	13	1.6
Clare	1	0.1	Montcalm	5	0.6
Clinton	5	0.6	Montmorency	2	0.3
Crawford	1	0.1	Muskegon	13	1.6
Delta	2	0.3	Newaygo	5	0.6
Dickinson	5	0.6	Oakland	73	9.1
Eaton	8	1.0	Oceana	5	0.6
Emmet	5	0.6	Ogemaw	4	0.5
Genesee	38	4.8	Ontonagon	3	0.4
Gladwin	3	0.4	Osceola	2	0.3
Gogebic	4	0.5	Oscoda	2	0.3
Grand Traverse	8	1.0	Otsego	1	0.1
Gratiot	4	0.5	Ottawa	20	2.5
Hillsdale	3	0.4	Presque Isle	2	0.3
Houghton	4	0.5	Roscommon	2	0.3
Huron	2	0.3	Saginaw	17	2.1
Ingham	23	2.9	Sanilac	8	1.0
Ionia	4	0.5	Shiawassee	5	0.6
Iosco	2	0.3	St. Clair	14	1.8
Iron	2	0.3	St. Joseph	8	1.0
Isabella	6	0.8	Tuscola	7	0.9
Jackson	15	1.9	Van Buren	7	0.9
Kalamazoo	21	2.6	Washtenaw	23	2.9
Kalkaska	2	0.3	Wayne	153	19.1
Kent	47	5.9	Wexford	1	0.1
Lake	2	0.3	Total	800	100



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