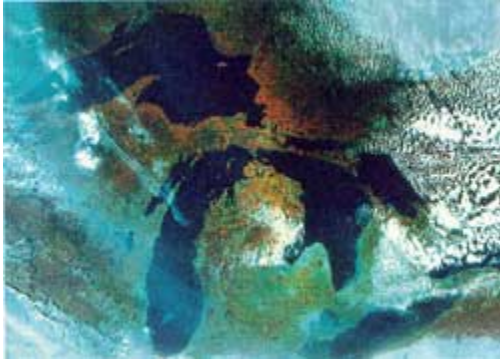


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## Water Quantity Issues in the Spotlight

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“The future of Michigan depends in large part upon the future of its water endowment. Surrounded by the Great Lakes, rich in inland water resources, and diverse in seasonal character – the state’s economic prosperity and quality of life are closely tied to its special relation with water.” Great Lakes and Water Resources Planning Commission, vision statement from “Water Resources for the

Future” 1987

In the January/February issue, Dr. Loudon discussed the impacts of PA 148 of 2003 and PA 177 of 2003 in the article “Agricultural Water Use.” These laws expand water use registration and reporting requirements and set up procedures for water use dispute resolution. In addition, Act 148 requires the state to “compile groundwater data into a statewide groundwater inventory and map” and to make this data available to the public. This information will be used in implementing Act 177 of 2003, which provides for groundwater protection and dispute resolution between competing water users. A contract to complete this work has been awarded to the USGS and MSU. Staff from the Agricultural Engineering Department are co-leads for this project. As products are developed we will provide updated information in this newsletter.

Interest in water quantity issues and the state water use reporting have historically come to the forefront during drought conditions and have been neglected during times of more normal rainfall. In recent years water use conflicts have brought new attention to how we are using our water resources, in particular how groundwater is being used. Significant deficits in precipitation in recent years have certainly contributed to the renewed interest. There are a number of other factors contributing to the fact that we have new legislation and that the Governor is proposing “water legacy” legislation.

The Great Lakes Charter (and its supplemental agreement Annex 2001) calls for increased water management within the region. Within Michigan, some major significant use conflicts have arisen. In Monroe County large scale quarries are contributing to lower groundwater levels impacting residential supplies. In Mecosta County local residents are contesting a bottled water company that is capturing “spring water” in headwater streams of recreational areas. Agricultural water use, especially by large capacity irrigation wells, is receiving increased scrutiny. Urban sprawl is bringing more people into the agricultural areas and irrigation is expanding into areas with limited water resources. For example, in Saginaw County, studies have shown that irrigation water supplies are impacting some residential water supplies.

The Michigan Commission of Agriculture recently adopted GAAMPS

