

1.0 Introduction

Background

In September of 2004, Washtenaw County adopted a comprehensive plan entitled the “*A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County: A Sense of Place, a Sustainable Future.*” The Plan, developed by Washtenaw County staff and informed by an intensive public engagement process, includes recommendations for preserving Washtenaw County’s character and natural resources. One of the recommendations of the Plan calls for an annual Water Quality Report to gauge the progress in meeting water quality enhancement goals. This Report represents the first step in meeting that recommendation. This Report addresses:

- Drinking water sources
- Drinking water quality
- Groundwater facts
- Surface Water facts
- Conditions and challenges that threaten water quality
- Programs and activities designed to protect and preserve water resources
- Next steps to address current challenges

This Report is designed to promote the following objectives contained in the Comprehensive Plan:

- WCCP Objective 1: Protect and improve the quality of our water resources through a comprehensive approach to planning, maintenance, retrofit, and new development best management practices
- WCCP Objective 2: Preserve wetlands, woodlands, floodplains and other natural features through resource assessments, model regulations and leveraging open space and trail programs

- WCCP Objective 3: Increase awareness and use of best management techniques through an aggressive public education program

The goal of this Report is to provide accurate and accessible water quality information for the county. Its objectives are:

- To assess the existing conditions and uses of Washtenaw County water resources
- To catalogue activities being taken to preserve, protect or remediate Washtenaw County water resources
- To define the potential challenges to Washtenaw County water resources and assess the steps being taken to respond to these challenges
- To develop recommendations for additional programs and activities that will address the results of the assessment and improve the health of Washtenaw County water resources

Organization:

The information contained in this report has been divided into two sections; groundwater quality and surface water quality.

- *Groundwater Quality* – examines the quality of water located beneath the ground surface in the soil pore spaces.
 - Residents interact with groundwater resources when they need drinking water wells or install a septic system.
 - Local units of government may use groundwater as a drinking water source for processing at a water treatment plant.

- *Surface Water Quality* – examines the quality of water that flows above ground.
 - Residents interact with surface water resources recreationally by swimming, fishing, boating and canoeing.
 - Local units of government may also draw drinking water from rivers and reservoirs to be processed at a water treatment plant.

Each of the above sections presents information within a format of Conditions and Trends, Protection Activities, and Challenges and Responses.

- *Conditions and Trends* – describes the known conditions of the County’s water resources: uses of water, water quality standards, water quality criteria, monitoring, and future projections.
- *Protection Activities* – describes the regulation process for water resources: wells first, Clean Water Act, Phase II Storm Water Permit, etc.
- *Challenges and Responses* – describes the known challenges to the County’s water resources: point source pollution, non-point source pollution, common pollutants. Also includes an assessment of how the protection activities address the challenge.

Also included is information about organizations that contribute to water resource management, and tools that municipal units can implement to protect water quality.

This report contains four appendices, A through D. Of particular interest is Appendix A, Local Units of Government Water Quality Indicators, and Appendix B, Watershed Plans and Best Management Practices, a summary of existing plans and recommendations.

This report can be accessed via the Washtenaw County website:
<http://www.ewashtenaw.org>