

U-M, other universities launch Great Lakes protection project

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The University of Michigan and 20 other U.S. and Canadian universities will join forces to propose a set of long-term research and policy priorities to help protect and restore the Great Lakes and to train the next generation of scientists, attorneys, planners and policy specialists who will study them.

The [Great Lakes](#) Futures Project of the Transborder Research University Network will use a cross-disciplinary, cross-sector approach to outlining alternative Great Lakes futures through science-based scenario analysis.

"With the recent release of the revised Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, this is a critical time to bring together scholars and practitioners from across the region to chart a more protective future for this precious resource," said Donald Scavia, director of U-M's Graham Sustainability Institute.

The Great Lakes [basin](#) is home to more than 35 million people—30 percent of the Canadian population and 10 percent of the U.S. population. The economic output of the basin is one of the largest in the world (more than \$4 trillion gross regional product), and the area is expected to grow by 20 million people over the next 20 years. While the basin contains more than 80 percent of the water in North America and 21 percent of the world's surface fresh water, demands from within and outside the basin are substantial and escalating.

The Great Lakes Futures Project will be led by Irena Creed of Western University, Gail Krantzberg of McMaster University, Kathryn Friedman of SUNY at Buffalo and U-M's Scavia. The project will be managed by Katrina Laurent of Western University.

This unprecedented collaboration of U.S. and Canadian academics, governments, nongovernment organizations, industry and private citizens will address questions such as "How can this water and watershed be managed?" and "What are the environmental, social, economic and political impacts of those management plans?" The assessment will begin with development of white papers outlining critical drivers of change in the Great Lakes basin over the past 50 years and the next 50 years, including climate change, the economy, biological and chemical contaminants, invasive species, demographics and societal values, governance and geopolitics, energy and [water](#) quantity.

More information: These papers will be developed by teams of graduate students from Canadian and U.S. universities under the mentorship of leaders in Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin research and presented at a workshop at U-M in January. The assessments will drive scenario analyses and policy briefs that will be communicated to residents and government officials in both Canada and the U.S.

Provided by University of Michigan

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