



# Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative

*Partners for Environmental & Economic Solutions*

Coordinating with  
the Counties of:  
Bay  
Huron  
Midland  
Saginaw  
Tuscola

Partnering with  
the Michigan  
Department of  
Environmental  
Quality and  
Michigan  
Department of  
Agriculture.

Date: XXXXXX  
To: Director Don Koivisto, MDA  
Director Steven Chester, MDEQ

Subject: Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative Phosphorus Committee Recommendations

In March 2008, under your direction, the Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative Phosphorus Committee (Committee) was formed to develop recommended next steps that could be taken that would result in phosphorus reduction to the Saginaw Bay. The Committee was asked to review the findings and recommendation of the statewide Phosphorus Policy Advisory Committee, in their report titled, "*Phosphorus Policy Advisory Committee Final Report – March 15, 2007*".

The Committee has already taken important action to limit phosphorus loading to Saginaw Bay and the Saginaw Bay Watershed. With strong support from Bay County, the Committee passed a resolution calling on all of the county boards of commissioners in the Saginaw Bay Watershed to adopt an ordinance restricting but not eliminating the use of residential lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus. The Committee provided the resolution to all counties within the Saginaw Bay Watershed. In the Watershed, Bay County, Roscommon County, and Saginaw County have adopted these ordinances, and other counties are considering adoption. Statewide, fertilizer ordinances have been adopted by multiple jurisdictions including: Allegan County; City of Battle Creek; Township of Cannon; City of East Grand Rapids; Hamburg Township; Bloomfield Township; Commerce Township; City of Novi; Keego Harbor; West Bloomfield Township; Ottawa County; City of Ferrysburg; Spring Lake Township; Village of Spring Lake; Muskegon County; Denton Township; Lake Township; Markey Township; Roscommon Township; Van Buren County; City of Ann Arbor; and Pittsfield Township.

The Committee recognizes the importance of the recently passed legislation limiting the amount of phosphorus in dishwashing detergent. However, the Committee strongly recommends that both the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) continue to work with the Legislature and interested parties to develop acceptable statewide legislation that would reduce the potential for phosphorus loadings to surface waters from residential lawn fertilizer, and improve turfgrass management practices.

In order to comprehensively address the phosphorus issue, the Committee formed three workgroups focused on source reduction: an Agriculture Phosphorus Pollution Prevention (P3) Workgroup, a Stormwater Phosphorus Workgroup, and a Point Source Phosphorus Workgroup. These subcommittees were charged with developing reduction strategies for each of these source areas.

The recommendations below are the highest priority actions identified by each workgroup and require immediate and substantial commitment from MDA and MDEQ. Additional recommendations can be found in the attached final report.

### **Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative Phosphorus Committee**

- After review of existing information regarding phosphorus sources and loadings to Saginaw Bay, the Committee recommends the MDEQ in cooperation with local interests, develop specific and attainable phosphorus goals for the Saginaw River and for Saginaw Bay.
- The Committee also recommends that MDEQ in cooperation with local interests develop a Saginaw River and Bay Phosphorus Strategy to meet the newly defined goals. While the recommendations in the attached report are a starting point for action, it is anticipated that additional measures may be necessary to achieve the new phosphorus goals.
- The Committee recommends that Phosphorus loadings from direct tributaries to Saginaw Bay be determined and this information be incorporated into the Phosphorus Reduction Strategy for Saginaw Bay.
- The Committee recommends that efforts be made to coordinate with the Saginaw Bay multi-year study being conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as well as other on-going monitoring efforts to facilitate the development of the above goals. However, this does not mean that development of the above goals and implementation of the Phosphorus Reduction Strategy for Saginaw Bay be delayed until completion of the NOAA study.

### **Agricultural Phosphorus Pollution Prevention Workgroup**

- The Committee recommends that MDA and MDEQ, in cooperation with Michigan State University, convene a workgroup to develop consistent crop nutrient recommendations, specific to the Saginaw Bay area, supported and promoted by all groups providing direction for farmers.
- The Committee recommends that MDA and MDEQ seek funding for five Conservation District livestock specialist positions in the Saginaw Bay area to focus on technical assistance to small and medium size livestock operations.
- The Committee recommends that MDA and MDEQ facilitate a meeting with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to discuss streamlining their process to focus on low cost, practical solutions for small and medium sized Michigan farm operations to address environmental issues.
- The Committee recommends that MDA and MDEQ encourage and streamline regulations regarding agricultural waste management to incorporate “green” technologies such as anaerobic digesters, and composting facilities using co-mingled waste.
- The Committee recommends that MDA in cooperation with Michigan State University and MDEQ, seek funding to provide new and maintain existing research farms in the Saginaw Bay area to demonstrate various management practices and evaluate their effectiveness under different cropping systems.
- The Committee recommends that MDA in cooperation with Michigan State University and MDEQ, identify means to establish the Saginaw Bay area as Michigan’s agricultural subsurface tile drainage research area for water quality and pursue funding for this effort.

### **Stormwater Phosphorus Workgroup**

- The Committee recommends that MDEQ, in cooperation with local health departments and other interested parties develop and implement a common data management system, educational outreach program, and enhance local partnerships in the Saginaw Bay Watershed to adequately address pollution problems from onsite wastewater treatment systems.
- The Committee recommends that MDEQ, in cooperation with local stormwater authorities and other interested parties, seek funding for a pilot project to promote Michigan’s Low Impact Development manual and Filling the Gaps manual throughout the Saginaw Bay Watershed.
- The Committee recommends that MDEQ work with the Michigan Legislature to actively support current Stormwater Utility Fee legislation that will provide local municipalities with a mechanism to collect sufficient funds to implement stormwater programs.

### **Point Source Phosphorus Workgroup**

- The Committee recommends that MDEQ, with the cooperation of local wastewater treatment facility operators, provide technical support and seek funding to develop a Best Management Practice (BMP) Manual that provides sustainable practices and guidance on economically

achievable phosphorus reduction methods (chemical, physical, biological) for various wastewater treatment processes.

- The Committee recommends that MDEQ provide technical support and work with local interest to seek funding for the Saginaw Bay Sustainable Business Forum, and encourage phosphorus reduction efforts in their discussions.
- The Committee recommends that MDEQ provide technical support to develop and coordinate a public education outreach program on phosphorus reduction through municipal wastewater treatment facilities in the Saginaw Bay Watershed.

The Committee is requesting specific action by either the MDA or MDEQ, or both regarding the recommendations identified above. There are numerous other recommendations the Committee identified that are being dealt with through local voluntary initiatives.

The Committee members thank you for the opportunity to present these recommendations. If you have questions about any of the recommendations please contact the workgroup chairs:

Agricultural P3 Workgroup: Jeannine Grobbel, Tuscola MSUE

Stormwater P Workgroup: Russ Beaubien, Spicer Group

Point Source P Workgroup: Bill Kaiser, Bay City WWTP

All three subcommittees are interested in continuing on with the implementation of these recommendations. We welcome an opportunity to discuss these recommendations. Any assistance that you can provide to move these issues from recommendations to action is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kim Coonan – Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative Phosphorus Committee Chair  
Bay County Commissioner

Ernie Kryiger – Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative Phosphorus Committee Co-chair  
Bay County Commissioner