



Great Lakes Protection Fund

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Funded Project

Value of Great Lakes Water Initiative

Project No.	921
Timeline	2009 – 2012
Award Amount	\$167,000
Team Leader	Victoria Pebbles and Rebecca Pearson, Great Lakes Commission, vpebbles@glc.org bpearson@glc.org
Project Website	http://www.glc.org/wateruse/watervalue/

This team examined how efficiency-oriented pricing could be employed in the Great Lakes region and how it could be linked to water management issues such as availability for human use and ecosystem impacts. The team explored cost drivers and revenue models for water utilities, identified those areas in the basin where reduced usage is likely to matter the most from a natural resource perspective, and explored the role of pricing in meeting ecological outcomes.

This project advanced the knowledge of how and why water rates are set in the Great Lakes region and brought experts together from around the region. The project resulted in a number of important products (links can be found below under Project Files):

- A literature review of the influence of water revenue structures on water use.
- List of the most vulnerable watersheds in the basin based on water availability and hydrologic and ecosystem sensitivities.
- Four successful utility rate workshops in Racine, WI; Ann Arbor, MI; Buffalo, NY; and Chicago, IL.
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- A Water Pricing Primer for the Great Lakes region.
- A report titled, Water Utility Rate Survey – Findings and Recommendations, (prepared from the team’s survey of Great Lakes utilities).
- A report documenting the work the team accomplished titled, Value of Great Lakes Water Initiative: Final Report.

The team found that while there is strong interest in efficiency-oriented rate structures, fear of revenue loss discourages adoption. Using the lessons learned from the project, the team developed recommendations to promote better pricing of water that would address economic concerns and lead to more ecologically sustainable consumption patterns.