



# MICHIGAN UTILIZES STATE AGENCIES TO FUND UWFP

**Location:** Grand Rapids UWFP Location

**Project Date:** 2013

## **Overview**

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy<sup>1</sup> (EGLE) had a limited involvement in the Grand River Urban Waters Federal Partnership. However, because of the utility of grants such as Urban Waters Partnership Grants, §319 grants, and state Clean Michigan Initiative grants, the state became a natural partner due to the ability to both administer grant funding and bridge the gap between local partner organizations in Grand Rapids and U.S. EPA. The limited but effective involvement of state nonpoint source staff allowed important local organizations to fund important work ranging from interviewing community residents about the history of the area to spearheading a rainscaping program, all while strengthening partnerships between local, state, and federal government and stakeholder organizations.

**Background:** Grand River UWFP

The Grand River Urban Waters Federal Partnership is a business and community-led effort to restore the urban stretch of the Grand River through downtown Grand Rapids.. The ability for fish and other creatures to thrive in the Grand River has been significantly impacted by the installation of five low head dams, floodwalls, urban encroachment, dredging, and grading. The dams limit fish passage and prohibit safe recreational uses of the River. Investments in pollution control in the urban area have already improved water quality and now the community is working for expanded public use and river-oriented economic development. The partnership is creating opportunities for private sector stakeholders to engage and interact with public agencies at the local, state, and national levels. The UWFP has played an important role in advancing the discussion about the need to restore and care for the Grand River and its tributaries as it flows through Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)

## **The CWA §319 Program: A natural link between States and Local Partners**

§319 of the Clean Water Act facilitates federal efforts to help states and local communities reduce nonpoint source pollution. The §319 program also allocates grant funding to states to support staff to address nonpoint source pollution issues. Due to the non-regulatory nature of nonpoint source management, states such as Michigan have made a point of emphasis to spread nonpoint staff throughout the state, allowing for regionally specific outreach in order to make the most efficient and effective use of state resources, including grants. There are 2 nonpoint source staff in the Grand Rapids District Office near the Grand River Partnership.

States agencies such as EGLE can help facilitate grant funding for Urban Waters Partnerships through grants such as the Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program. For example, in 2017 EGLE approved a partnership with the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council on a rainscaping project under that grant program. EGLE §319 staff from the Grand Rapids District Office were involved in this grant process, taking advantage of the proximity of state staff to the Grand River Partnership.

In addition to grants specifically designed for Urban Waters Partnerships, the EGLE §319 program has also been able to facilitate §319 and Clean Michigan Initiative grants which share water quality goals with the Grand River Partnership. A notable example of this is a 2018 grant project using grant funds, the Lower Grand River Expanded Education Network. This initiative builds on the successes that a local organization, Groundswell, has had by partnering with EGLE to inform and educate Spanish-speaking people living within the Plaster Creek Watershed on water quality issues and solutions. In 2014, EGLE helped facilitate grant funding for the Lower Grand River Education Initiative, involving community members by educating them about the Lower Grand River Watershed Management Plan and focusing on diversity and inclusion to ensure that a more inclusive variety of community members were involved. These are examples of how state-facilitated grant projects can complement the goals of local Urban Waters Partnerships, and how having state staff aware of all of these initiatives creates a helpful synergy between state and federal agencies, and local organizations.

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