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Report Demonstrates Importance of Water to Michigan's Economy, Serves as Call to Action

ANN ARBOR --- A report released today by the University Research Corridor says that one in five jobs in Michigan are directly tied to the quantity and quality of Michigan's clean water. While Michigan's "Blue Economy" is a driving force toward economic growth, protections for our state's lakes, rivers and streams are coming up short. Michigan LCV said the report should be a wake up call to elected officials to address critical water quality and quantity issues affecting the state's freshwater.

"Clean water is Michigan's most valuable natural resource, for our economy and our environment," said Jack Schmitt, Deputy Director for Michigan LCV. "With so many livelihoods tied to our lakes, rivers and streams, the highest standards of protections for Michigan's freshwater should be the top priority for our elected officials."

The "Innovating for the Blue Economy" report says that Michigan ranks fourth in the nation in employment in water-related industries, and that our state's economic future is tied to the health of the Great Lakes. However, Michigan's "Blue Economy" faces challenges as many current protections do not go far enough to ensure the continued quality and quantity of freshwater for generations of Michiganders to come. Widespread pollution in Michigan's lakes and rivers from toxins such as mercury and PCBs affect fisheries and tourism, and new proposed hydraulic fracking rules from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) would not adequately protect our state's most valuable natural resource.

"Decision makers in Lansing should take note that the key to economic growth in Michigan rests largely on the protection of our state's natural resources," Schmitt said. "Without more attention paid to cleaning up and conserving Michigan's lakes, rivers and streams, we are sending ourselves up a river without a paddle."

The "Innovating for the Blue Economy" report was commissioned by the University Research Corridor, which is a partnership between Michigan State University, Wayne State University and the University of Michigan. The full report can be found here: <http://urcmich.org/news/2014water/>

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Michigan League of Conservation Voters is the leading non-partisan political voice for protecting Michigan's land, air and water. Visit our website: <http://www.michiganlcv.org>.