

PROTECT YOUR DRINKING WATER

The Great Lakes supply more than 40 million people with drinking water and are one of the cheapest, most sustainable sources of drinking water in the United States. Yet the lakes are threatened by numerous assaults. Fortunately, you can do a number of simple things to protect the quality of your drinking water.

Your Essential Great Lakes: Vital, Vulnerable

The Great Lakes are the largest surface freshwater system in the world.

- The lakes represent 20 percent of the world's supply of surface freshwater and 90 percent of the U.S. supply.
- Each year the lakes are subjected to sewage discharges, industrial waste and chemical pollutants that harm our drinking water and the ecosystems that naturally purify that water.
- Mercury, PCBs and other chemicals do not naturally get flushed from the lakes. Instead, they collect in the tissue of Great Lakes fish and make their way up the food chain to people.
- Some children exposed to contaminants show lower IQs and developmental delays.
- Pharmaceutical byproducts have been detected in the drinking water of Great Lakes cities.



Protect the Great Lakes and ensure a source of clean drinking water for future generations. Photo: Lloyd DeGrane

How You Can Help

- Take unused medications to a disposal center and don't flush them down the toilet.
- Don't dump anything down storm drains. Reduce water use during heavy rains to avoid overburdening the sanitary sewer system.
- If you notice a source of pollution entering a river, stream or lake in your community, contact local leaders and ask them to protect Great Lakes water quality.
- For more tips, see www.greatlakes/WQTips.

For more information contact Lyman Welch at (312) 939-0838 x230, or lwelch@greatlakes.org

Formed in 1970, the Alliance for the Great lakes is the oldest citizens' Great Lakes organization in North America. Its mission is to conserve and restore the world's largest freshwater resources using policy, education and local efforts, ensuring a healthy Great Lakes and clean water for generations of people and wildlife. The Alliance is headquartered in Chicago with offices in Cleveland, Milwaukee and Grand Haven. More about the Alliance is online at www.greatlakes.org.