



Blue Accounting

In the Great Lakes region of North America, Blue Accounting is a groundbreaking initiative helping leaders to manage the world's largest freshwater ecosystem in a way that is more collaborative, effective and holistic than ever before. Blue Accounting facilitates collaboration among state, federal, provincial and private sector organizations to set regional shared goals and metrics, track progress toward those goals, and deliver relevant information to key audiences on an innovative online platform. Blue Accounting's mission is to improve decision making and increase efficiency of water management issues in the basin.



Photograph of the Great Lakes

THE STORY

In 2013, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence governors and premiers recognized the need for a comprehensive mechanism for monitoring the Great Lakes' water resources. Their call led The Nature Conservancy and the Great Lakes Commission to jointly create Blue Accounting. Blue Accounting is a collaborative effort with U.S. and Canadian federal, state and provincial agencies, NGOs and private businesses that make decisions affecting the health of the lakes, its citizens and the economy. Blue Accounting is currently supporting five pilot issues (on the right).

Many stakeholders and experts contribute their leadership, program development and IT skills to the launch and development of Blue Accounting. Dow, for instance, has collaborated with the initiative through the pioneering efforts of one of our employees, Dave McLean, business IT director for Packaging & Specialty Plastics, Feedstocks & Energy and Hydrocarbons.

McLean's involvement with Blue Accounting initiatives dates to 2010. At that time, one of Dow's corporate collaborators, The Nature Conservancy, shared its vision of Blue Accounting with McLean and Neil Hawkins, Dow's chief sustainability officer, during the early stages of concept development. McLean now serves on Blue Accounting's bi-national advisory committee and regularly works with its leadership team. More specifically, McLean advises on the overall program design, program management and IT approaches to help enable the success of the initiative and the pilot projects. He also provides connections to other technical Dow expertise as needed.

Dow's desire to be a good water steward coupled with our strategic collaboration and relationship with The Nature Conservancy paved the way for our involvement with Blue Accounting. This groundbreaking sustainable collaborative initiative highlights the unique role that industry can play to support sustainable efforts to manage water in local communities without necessarily leading the effort themselves.

5 PILOT INITIATIVES



Protecting water at its source

The Great Lakes Source Water Initiative collaborates across borders to protect the waters that serve as the source of drinking water for 48 million people within the Great Lakes and Lawrence River basins. This initiative is guided by a binational work group, of which Dow is a part.



Preventing the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS)

Blue Accounting convenes Great Lakes AIS experts and managers to establish metrics and track progress toward regional goals through each step of the invasion process.



Protecting critical coastal wetlands

In collaboration with the Great Lakes Coastal Conservation Working Group, Blue Accounting will increase the efficiency of regional coastal conservation and resource management.



Maritime transportation: Economic engine for the Great Lakes region

Tracks progress in implementing a regional strategy that aims to double maritime trade, support the region's industrial core, and shrink its environmental impact.



Phosphorus control in Lake Erie

Blue Accounting uses ErieStat, an online tool that tracks total and dissolved phosphorus entering the lakes' central and west basins from specific tributaries.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Blue Accounting homepage: <https://www.blueaccounting.org/>

Foundational document: <https://www.glc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/2014-blue-accounting-recommendations-glc.pdf>

Press release on Dow's role: <https://www.dow.com/en-us/news/news-detail/mclean-receives-prestigious-dow-sustainability-innovator-award>

Twitter: @BlueAccounting

More questions?: Email Tawny Mata at tawny.mata@tnc.org

BLUE ACCOUNTING AND THE GREAT LAKES

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH FOR A COMPLEX SYSTEM



The Great Lakes provide **DRINKING WATER FOR 48 MILLION PEOPLE**, fuel a **\$5 TRILLION REGIONAL ECONOMY**, and create **AN INVALUABLE SENSE OF HOME AND COMMUNITY** for the basin via their scenic beauty and recreation.



The government agencies of **TWO COUNTRIES, EIGHT STATES, TWO PROVINCES, AND 249 COUNTIES**, as well as hundreds of NGOs and private businesses, make decisions that affect the lakes. **WE MUST WORK TOGETHER TO SUCCEED.**



Blue Accounting

Blue Accounting, an initiative supported by an online information platform, provides decision-makers with a big picture view of critical Great Lakes issues.



Initially, Blue Accounting is supporting five complex issues:



AQUATIC
INVASIVE SPECIES



SOURCE
WATER



PHOSPHORUS
CONTROL



COASTAL
WETLANDS



MARITIME
TRANSPORTATION

Working together, we can improve the decisions we make to ensure the Great Lakes will always be the backbone of our region, supplying fresh water and natural beauty and serving as a powerful economic engine.

HOW BLUE ACCOUNTING WORKS

Stakeholders with diverse interests in the Great Lakes basin are working independently – but face shared issues. To provide decision-makers with a big picture view of these critical issues, Blue Accounting supports collaborative groups of experts and stakeholders as they set shared goals and metrics, identify strategies and track progress towards these goals. All to better protect, restore and use the lakes.

Here's a snapshot of how Blue Accounting typically works.



Blue Accounting supports collaborative groups as they work together to improve issues in the basin.

EXAMPLE ISSUE: COLLABORATING TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY

1 Set shared goals and metrics: define what success looks like and track progress towards those goals.

GOAL: REDUCE NUTRIENT RUN-OFF INTO THE LAKES



METRIC 1: Trends in concentration of nutrients over time



METRIC 2: Acres implementing conservation practices to keep nutrients on the land



METRIC 3: Number of local source water protection plans addressing nutrients



2 Review current strategies and investments: gather baseline information around current regional investments, management strategies, and local policies for nutrient management to provide context.



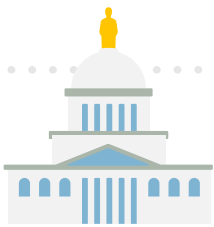
Farmers develop nutrient management plans and governments invest in on-farm conservation

3 Invest in and implement strategies: Using context from step two and the best available science, governments invest in and implement strategies that best fit their jurisdiction.



4 Track progress and adapt: use shared metrics and ongoing data to evaluate progress and refine strategies and investments. Share data on Blue Accounting's online information platform.

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Achieve shared goal: Through actionable information delivered to leaders and decision-makers, the group ensures that investments and strategies to protect, restore and sustainably use the Great Lakes achieve the intended outcomes.