With the finalization of its 40-year Wastewater Master Plan (WWMP) in 2020, the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) has demonstrated its ability to act as a national leader in innovative collaborative planning for regional water and wastewater systems. The Watershed Hub was created as a direct outcome of the WWMP to continue the philosophy of inclusion and further GLWA’s goal of establishing itself as a regional hub utility. Now in year two, the Hub continues to advance a common vision: improved regional water quality achieved through planning and decision-making that prioritizes shared objectives and integrates stormwater and sanitary programs.

Why collaborate?

GLWA’s wastewater system serves 2.8 million people and spans 15,000 miles of pipes across 79 communities in southeast Michigan. GLWA is proud to provide the leadership necessary to convene regional stakeholders and realize the power of overlapping priorities. Ensuring that stakeholders representing a diverse array of priorities take turns placing their work at center stage has been critical in the early stages of the Watershed Hub’s development.

The Watershed Hub is currently supporting several regional water quality monitoring initiatives and developing a GIS-based datamart where their outputs can be shared with key stakeholders. These diverse initiatives include continuous monitoring, designing an investigational E. coli sampling program, developing new microbial source tracking methods, and piloting new real-time monitoring technology.

The Watershed Hub is turning theory into practice. The group has collaboratively developed a regional E. coli grid-monitoring program and is exploring options to form cooperative partnerships that may yield better and more extensive data on dry weather impairments at a cheaper price point. This Watershed Hub received a vote of regional confidence in the spring of 2021 with the awarding of a $40,000 grant from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) to create this work plan.