

Indiana Sees Economic Opportunities In Water Innovation

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Indiana may be known as the Crossroads of America, but the Midwestern state is recognizing the role that water plays in its regional economic strength.

Indiana leads the nation in terms of the percentage of its total employment in water-related industries, according to *Innovating for the Blue Economy*, a new report commissioned by the University Research Corridor in Michigan.

The study found that 23.3 percent of Indiana's total private sector employment in 2012 was in industries most intensively affected by water supply and quality. The Great Lakes region was well represented in the findings, with Wisconsin ranking second and Michigan placing fourth. The six-state region had a concentration of 3.8 million total workers in water-related industries.

Water-related industries include both the companies delivering core water technology products and services as well as those that use water as a key input to their operations, and/or have significant water discharge that must be processed properly. As a result, issues of water supply, infrastructure, and innovation are key to these regional economies.

This message was reinforced by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, which completed a comprehensive analysis of the state's water resources in 2014. While it noted that the Midwest has not faced the severe drought that dominates headlines in California and other western states, the impact of water availability is just as important and requires careful planning

for the future.

"This is definitely a jobs and economic development issue," said Indiana Chamber President and CEO Kevin Brinegar, who noted much of the state's water demand is driven by manufacturing and agriculture. "Our state's economy is growing more diverse, but we always will make things. And it often takes large, reliable supplies of water to do so."

For example, the report noted an increase in agricultural irrigation in northern and central Indiana, which produces large crops of corn and soybeans. A growing population in Central Indiana is projected to require an additional 50 million gallons per day by 2050 and limited natural water supplies in the southern part of the state are expected to be insufficient for anticipated business development in the region.

"What this study does is set the stage for creation of a long-needed, long-range water plan for the state," explained Vince Griffin, the state chamber's vice president of energy and environmental policy. "While a credible plan may take three to five years, legislators – from the Senate and House, as well as both parties – understand the importance of this issue and are prepared to lead on the next steps."

Such collaboration on water issues is already beginning to take place in Indiana. The state overlaps two of the leading water technology clusters in the nation. Confluence is an Indiana-Ohio-Kentucky initiative that was launched

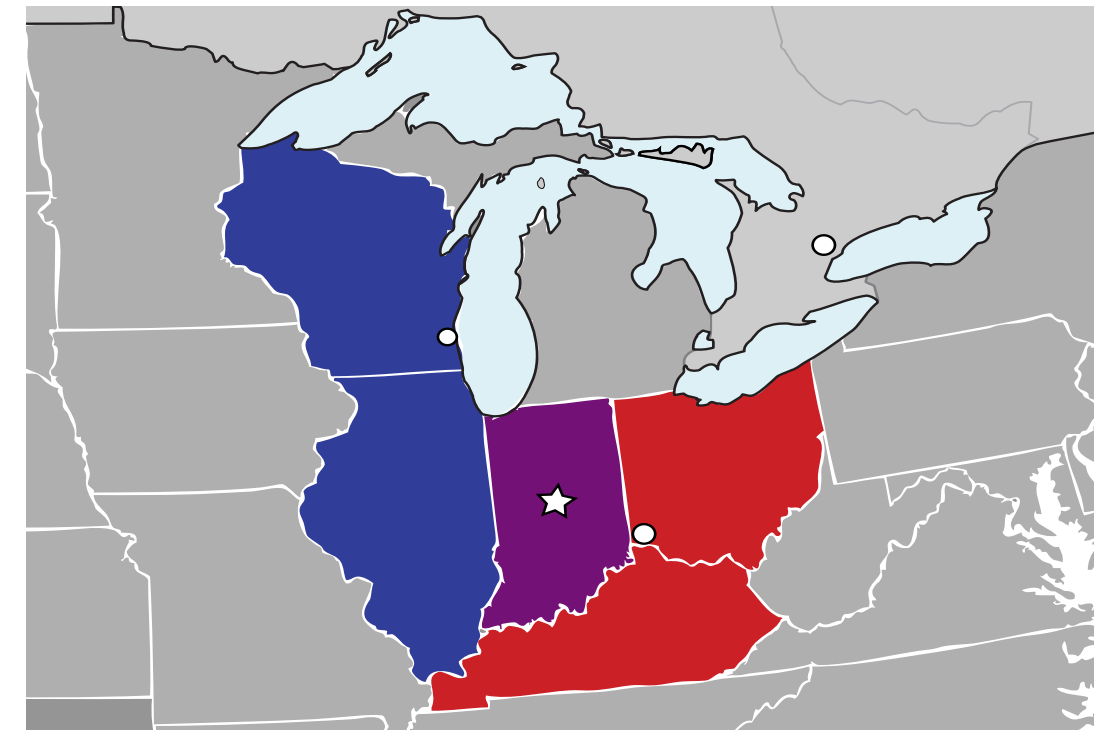
with support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Small Business Administration to leverage federal resources, such as the national water laboratories in Cincinnati. To the north, the Tri-State Alliance is an Indiana-Illinois-Wisconsin effort that promotes water research and includes Milwaukee as a United Nations Global Compact City for freshwater expertise.

In the state's capital, Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard cited progress in water infrastructure as one of his most significant accomplishments during a spring meeting organized by the German

American Chamber of Commerce of the Midwest. Ballard, who serves as co-chair of the U.S. Conference of Mayors Water Council, noted the transfer of the city's water and wastewater utilities to a public charitable trust and significant investments being made to upgrade the infrastructure, including a massive seven-mile underground tunnel system to prevent 54 million gallons of untreated sewage from overflowing into the White River.

This effort is creating a new awareness of water issues in the city, such as *Reconnecting Our Waterways*, a grassroots effort that has drawn dozens of organizations to use a collective impact model to improve neighborhoods by better appreciating water resources.

Another effort to deploy new water technologies through a "living laboratory" is being organized by Global Water Technologies, in partnership with Indiana University - Purdue University at Indianapolis, the urban campus of the



state's leading research institutions.

The living laboratory concept is designed to introduce new innovations and technologies in a real-world setting, so

they can be demonstrated and benefits can be shared with other utilities in the state. Initial efforts include better water usage data tools, advanced leak detection and pipeline rehabilitation methods developed in Europe and the United States.

Having recognized growing opportunities in the water technology sector, Indiana will be a state to watch in the coming years.



Erik Hromadka is the CEO of Global Water Technologies, a company based in Indiana that is developing solutions to improve water efficiency. More information about the company is available at: gwtr.com