

MAKING WATER WORK:

RESEARCH CONTINUES TO DRIVE LONG-TERM PLANNING

Series of impact reports on Indiana Chamber Foundation studies

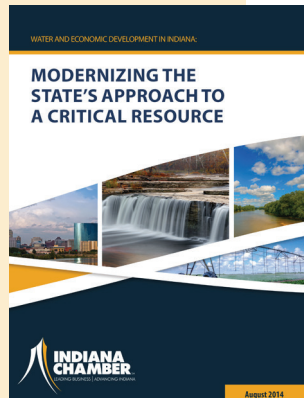
FROM THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY TO:

Water and Economic Development in Indiana: Modernizing the State's Approach to a Critical Resource

Water is a valuable resource and Indiana, unlike many areas of the country, is fortunate to have abundant water resources. The state has the highest fraction (in the country) of its economy that requires abundant water supplies (Rosaen, 2014). We have built an economy that expects water when it needs it. Today, only with conservation and proper management, can the state's rivers, streams, lakes and aquifers sustain current water needs. Future demands will increase with economic growth and industrial development, increasing the need for more formal and technical methods to meet our water supply needs.

Just as water supplies are based on natural conditions that vary from place to place, the demands for water fluctuate throughout a given year and are different between hydrologic basins. This report provides lawmakers, water consumers and all Hoosiers with useful data that can guide the development of new laws to help manage critical resources and preserve and protect the many water assets of Indiana.

An evaluation of the scope and magnitude of similar programs around the country and an analysis of available hydrologic data in Indiana suggests that water planning and analysis in the state will require substantial annual investments. If water is viewed as a priority, Indiana should begin drafting a comprehensive water plan. This report is a first step in that process.



A recent edition of *The Kiplinger Letter*, a highly regarded forecaster of economic conditions, contained the following statements in devoting its entire lead page to the topic of water resources:

- *Wet areas are getting wetter, dry ones drier ... including regions responsible for most American food production*
- *The U.S. already has a long history of water disputes. Expect more of them*
- *The average American uses up to 100 gallons of water per day*

Over the last five-plus years, Indiana has demonstrated a commitment to not fall into the “water war” category and to responsibly manage its water resources to help ensure future economic success. It all began with a 2014 Indiana Chamber Foundation study titled *Water and Economic Development in Indiana: Modernizing the State's Approach to a Critical Resource*.

In the 25-year recent history of impactful studies and reports from the Indiana Chamber Foundation, this analysis may arguably prove to be the most critical. It has spearheaded five consecutive years of important legislative action – with undoubtedly more to come. As the study Preface states, “It will take a team effort going forward to achieve this much-needed statewide water resource plan. We hope this report will serve as a playbook in that critical game.”

The results have indeed guided subsequent efforts, but the lessons learned begin with the development and execution of the water study itself. A diverse, 14-person advisory council volunteered its time, participated in lengthy discussions and provided important perspectives on the scope and direction of the research.

In addition to these businesses, industry and association representatives, five state legislators were active participants in the process. Their early buy-in on the importance of the topic and understanding of the issue has helped produce the legislative progress that has been achieved.

Did everyone agree with all the findings, analysis and recommendations? Maybe not. But all at the table had the opportunity to deliver their input, develop a greater appreciation for the viewpoints of others and gain further commitment to working together to help move the state forward in this critical area.

coincided with the research findings. On the House side, Rep. Ed Soliday, also from Valparaiso, has been another leader.

identified for financial resources to help combat aging infrastructure. In more recent years, the Indiana Finance Authority was established as the leader of executive branch activities related to the state's water programs.

A Water Infrastructure Assistance Fund was established in 2017 and initial funding (\$20 million) was provided in the 2019 budget session. There is more work to do – both financially and in developing the full-fledged plan – to most effectively utilize the available resources.

Yes, at times we wish the process would proceed at a faster pace. But, as the study noted, this is a complex issue. Ensuring long-term needs are met must not come at the expense of hasty, short-term decisions.

Leaders continue to cite the 2014 Indiana Chamber Foundation study as the impetus for what has taken place since. As the Indiana Chamber embarks on an energy study for the state, the same collaborative and thoughtful approach will guide the efforts with a similar end goal in sight – a long-range plan to ensure reliable and affordable resources for a state that heavily depends on just that.