



Great Lakes Compact Waukesha Water Diversion Proposal Fact Sheet 2016

Water Withdrawals Threaten the Great Lakes

The Great Lakes are a wonder of the world. They hold almost 20 percent of the world's surface fresh water, supply drinking water to more than 30 million people, and are the foundation of our economy and way of life. The Great Lakes are vast, but fragile. A one-time gift from the glaciers 10,000 years ago, less than 1 percent of the water in the Great Lakes is renewed annually through rainfall and snowmelt.

Removing water from the Great Lakes basin can put fish and wildlife at risk by damaging habitat and degrading water quality. It can also worsen the pressures of climate change and increasing water use — both predicted to lower Great Lakes water levels.

Unwise water use can impact the environment and economy – from shipping, to outdoor recreation, to agriculture.

Protecting Great Lakes Water: Great Lakes Compact & Agreement

Residents of the region, including communities, business leaders and industry united to promote water conservation and to prevent diversion of Great Lakes water outside the region. The landmark Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact (Compact) was adopted in 2008 to safeguard the health of the lakes for generations to come. Approved by the eight Great Lakes states - Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York - the U.S. Congress and signed by President George W. Bush, the Compact bans the diversion of Great Lakes water outside the basin, with limited exceptions, and sets responsible standards for water use and conservation within the basin.

The water management pact took a decade to develop and is a first-of-its-kind model for a consensus-based, region-wide approach to decisions about how much and how far away Great Lakes water can be used. The compact provides significant protections to Great Lakes water because it treats groundwater, surface water and Great Lakes tributaries as a single, connected system.

The eight Great Lakes states and two Canadian provinces are tasked with developing their own water conservation policies as required by the Compact. And, each of the states and provinces has created water withdrawal permitting programs; some are notable successes, while others need improvement.

Regional adherence to the conservation policies outlined in the Compact is expected to provide a strong legal defense to potential water withdrawal proposals in the future. Such withdrawals could endanger the lakes' ecology, threatening the region's economic lifeblood and the nation's largest surface freshwater resource.

Great Lakes Compact Sees First Test

The city of Waukesha, Wisconsin, located a few miles west of Milwaukee, lies outside the Great Lakes basin and is requesting an exception to the ban on diversions of Great Lakes water under the Compact. The proposed Waukesha diversion application is the first since the Compact was adopted in 2008. This application may be a flashpoint for the Compact, establishing its effectiveness and serving as a precedent for other future diversion requests.

After a five-year review of Waukesha's application, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on January 7, 2016 advanced the diversion proposal to the Regional Body/Compact Council for regional review. Under the Compact, any diversion application must be approved by all eight Great Lakes states and input from the two Canadian provinces. Any state may veto the diversion application.

The public has an opportunity to submit their comments by March 14, 2016. Please submit comments directly to the multi-state/provincial email address of: comments@waukeshadiversion.org and or: <http://www.waukeshadiversion.org/comments/>

We need Minnesota voices on Thursday, March 3rd! There will be a Public Listening Session in Duluth with the Minnesota DNR. This is an opportunity to speak up for the Great Lakes and let Governor Dayton know that we reject Waukesha's proposal!
More information at www.protectourgreatlakes.org/minnesota

Please also send your Governor/Premier a comment encouraging them to:
Governor Mark Dayton: 651-201-3400

SAY NO TO WAUKESHA'S DIVERSION



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