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Eight Great Lakes governors and two Canadian premiers ask Great Lakes citizens to chime in.

MADISON - On Thursday, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) officially forwarded the City of Waukesha's application to divert Lake Michigan water to the Regional Body and Great Lakes Compact Council for a formal regional review process. Waukesha's application is the first test to the ban on diversions in the Great Lakes Compact.

This decision will have a lasting effect on one of our most vital natural resources and the people who depend on the Great Lakes for generations to come. As such, it is imperative the process toward reaching that decision is thorough and accurate.

"It is our hope and expectation that the regional review process will consider in earnest the deficiencies we have identified in the application and that the Regional Body will recognize that it does not fully and honestly met the standards laid out in the Compact," states Jodi Habush Sinykin, an attorney with Midwest Environmental Advocates. "But the application's inconsistency with key Compact provisions and Waukesha's ongoing refusal to answer key questions or explore viable alternatives tells a different story. Quite simply, this application, as currently proposed, falls short and should be rejected by the Great Lakes governors in keeping with the imperative to protect our region's precious Great Lakes for future generations."

This decision not only sets the standard by which all other applications will be measured, but also determines when, where and how often citizens across the Great Lakes region will be allowed to voice their opinions in future decisions. During a public briefing held by the Regional Body and Compact Council on January 7th, the secretariat of the Regional Body and Compact Council set the budget for the entire review process at $261,668. This process is meant to give decision makers and members of the public in all eight Great Lakes states and two Canadian provinces, in addition to Tribes and First Nations, ample opportunity to consider whether this application meets the high standards laid out in the Great Lakes Compact.

"We are concerned that the current budget does not allow for any independent technical review on the part of the Regional Body and Compact Council and only allows for one public hearing in the City of Waukesha. which would limit the public's full participation in this critical process. If you don't write a budget that allows for multiple public hearings in each jurisdiction, you limit the ability of the public to participate right from the start. This is a precedent setting decision. Every Great Lakes governor of every Great Lakes state needs the best information

available to make an informed decision, and they need to know what the constituents they were elected to represent think about Waukesha's application," said George Meyer, Executive Director of Wisconsin Wildlife Federation.

Despite mounting evidence to the contrary, the City of Waukesha says it does not have a reasonable water supply alternative to Lake Michigan water. A report by GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc. shows that Waukesha can meet its drinking water needs safely by implementing the minimum conservation measures in its own conservation plan, excluding portions of communities that do not need and have publicly stated they do not want Great Lakes water, and adding treatment technologies to three of its seven deep groundwater wells, while continuing to use its shallow wells. This alternative costs $150 million less than a Great Lakes diversion, secures water independence for Waukesha residents, protects public health, and minimizes adverse environmental impacts.

Ezra Meyer, Water Specialist for Clean Wisconsin, said, "So far, in Wisconsin alone, the response has been overwhelmingly in opposition to the application as drafted and presented in Waukesha's home state. To be clear, Wisconsin residents are not opposed to all Great Lakes diversions under the Great Lakes Compact, but Wisconsin residents have repeatedly demonstrated that they are opposed to this application. Citizens across Wisconsin showed up to three public hearings, submitting over 3,000 comments, and asking their state legislators to represent their concerns nationally."

The Regional Body consists of the eight Great Lakes governors and two Canadian premiers. The Compact Council, which is made up of the eight Great Lakes governors, will either approve or deny the application, taking into account the Regional Body's findings. The Regional Body and Compact Council review will include a public comment period and at least one public hearing in Wisconsin, where citizens across the Great Lakes region will again be able to voice their concerns, this time to a wider audience.

The public comment period will last approximately 60 days, beginning Tuesday, January 12, 2016. There will be one public information meeting and public hearing held by the Regional Body and Compact Council on February 18th, 2016. The Compact Implementation Coalition encourages all Great Lakes citizens to submit comments, write letters, call their governors and premiers and attend the public hearing to testify.

The eight Great Lakes governors are Rick Snyder (Michigan), Mark Dayton (Minnesota), John Kasich (Ohio), Andrew Cuomo (New York), Mike Pence (Indiana), Bruce Rauner (Illinois), Tom Wolf (Pennsylvania) and Scott Walker (Wisconsin). The two Canadian premiers are Kathleen Wynne (Ontario) and Philippe Couillard (Quebec).

The Regional Body and Compact Council has made application materials and important dates available and will be updating the public on any further developments at www.waukeshadiversion.org .