

Updated report reaffirms sustainable alternative for ample, clean drinking water now and into the future using a combination of shallow and deep groundwater wells for Waukesha.

WAUKESHA, WI – New information confirms the City of Waukesha is able to sustainably provide its residents with ample, clean drinking water now and into the future using a combination of shallow and deep groundwater wells. Waukesha is the first to apply for Great Lakes water under a narrowly defined exception to the ban on diversions in the Great Lakes Compact, which was signed into federal law in 2008.

Last summer, the Compact Implementation Coalition (CIC), a group of local, state and regional environmental organizations, submitted a detailed analysis to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) outlining how Waukesha could meet its current and future water needs without taking water from Lake Michigan. The WDNR considered the Non-Diversion Solution (NDS) and asked the City of Waukesha to complete additional analysis regarding the sustainability of the deep groundwater aquifer.

"It was good to know the WDNR reviewed the Non-Diversion Solution, but it does not seem that they did so in earnest. Our intent in preparing the Non-Diversion Solution, was to provide the WDNR and the City of Waukesha with a foundation to begin a genuine analysis of its reasonable water supply alternatives which we do not believe they have done," said Jennifer Bolger Breceda from Milwaukee Riverkeeper. "Now, we're relying on the Regional Body and Compact Council to take a more comprehensive look at the Non-Diversion Solution and the viable alternatives Waukesha has."

The new report , written by GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc., provides new information on the cost and sustainability of treatment options, which directly answer the questions the WDNR asked regarding the initial analysis. This new information reaffirms that Waukesha does not need a Great Lakes diversion to meet its current needs. The CIC will submit this new information along with formal comments to the Regional Body and Compact Council.

The new information finds:

- Instead of letting wells fail as a justification for requesting Great Lakes water, Waukesha should invest in the operation and maintenance of its current infrastructure and replace the well to regain its historic capacity. It's important to note that the underperformance of this well was not included in the city's original application, but included as supplemental material after the Wisconsin public comment period ended in August.
- Waukesha should evaluate the treatment technology it's neighbors in Brookfield and Pewaukee use, which does not produce the same problematic radioactive waste or affect the total amount of water needing to be pumped from the deep aquifer. The treatment technology is adaptable and can be scaled to fit small and large systems, including Waukesha's. In Waukesha's case, the city could use the technology on six individual deep water wells in combination with their current treatment technology on one well. It's important to note that the only reason the CIC's NDS included the use of reverse osmosis is because this is the technology Waukesha included in its application as its preferred treatment alternative. Moreover, the challenges of disposing of the waste are surmountable engineering issues and technologically and economically viable options do exist.
- Waukesha should evaluate the sustainability of deep aquifer use in the area by using Waukesha's actual historic water use to predict its future water use. Based on its past water use, Waukesha's future water use should continue to decline even with population growth and Waukesha’s planned conservation efforts, which could be expanded for even greater water savings. Evaluating the sustainability of the deep aquifer should be done with actual data, not unsubstantiated future water use.

"When an option so commonsense as replacing a well that is underperforming isn't considered part of a reasonable alternative, it's difficult to believe that the alternatives Waukesha evaluates in its application were considered in any sort of good-faith effort,” said Ezra Meyer from Clean Wisconsin. “At the very least, the Non-Diversion Solution should show the Regional Body and Compact Council that Waukesha has not demonstrated that it has exhausted all its alternatives to Great Lakes water as the Great Lakes Compact requires. But more than that, we believe the Non-Diversion Solution is a way forward, not just for the City of Waukesha, but for the region as a whole to conserve and protect our Great Lakes for future generations."

By adding appropriate treatment technology, investing in and properly maintaining its current infrastructure, and implementing responsible conservation measures, the City of Waukesha can sustainably supply its residents with clean drinking water using its existing groundwater sources. The Non-Diversion Solution continues to represent the most cost-effective and technically feasible alternative to meet the existing and future water supply demands for the City of Waukesha.

This new report can be found here , and the original Non-Diversion Solution can be found here .