

Wisconsin Water Table—Compact Implementation Committee

Clean Wisconsin ▪ Midwest Environmental Advocates
Milwaukee Riverkeeper ▪ River Alliance of Wisconsin
Sixteenth Street Community Health Center
Waukesha County Environmental Action League

Questions and Issues Raised by Waukesha's Proposed Lake Michigan Diversion Plan

Water Supply Sustainability Questions

- What water supply alternatives has Waukesha considered in addition to a Great Lakes diversion? What makes the Lake Michigan diversion the best of these alternatives?
- What is the difference between the projected area and population to be served by a Lake Michigan diversion with the current area served by the Waukesha wastewater treatment facility?
- Would the Waukesha Water Utility consider limiting the geographical area that would be served by a diversion from Lake Michigan to the current geographical area that it served in 2008?
- Will Waukesha's diversion request include other neighboring communities who may want Lake Michigan water? Will the City of Waukesha and its Water Utility sell diverted waters in the future?

Cost

- What are the total projected costs of Waukesha's diversion plan? How can it be broken down in terms of construction, equipment, energy and remediation costs?
- Who will be footing the bill? City of Waukesha? Waukesha Utility ratepayers? Waukesha County? Wisconsin taxpayers? What are the projected rate or tax increases necessary to pay for a diversion including return flow?
- Has a cost comparison of the various return flow alternatives been prepared? What about a cost comparison of the diversion versus no diversion alternatives? If a cost comparison has not been completed, why not? When will it be made available?

Process

1/8/2009

- How have municipalities downstream of Underwood Creek, or those with Underwood Creek within their boundaries, been formally advised of Waukesha's diversion plans?
- How have communities downstream on the Fox River, including Illinois communities, been apprised of Waukesha's plan to reduce flow to the Fox?
- What are the City's plans to have this diversion application reviewed by the Southeastern Wisconsin Watersheds Trust, a newly formed consortium of municipalities, conservation nonprofits, MMSD, scientists and others developing comprehensive water quality and watershed restoration plans for the region, including the Menomonee River?
- How will concerns or objections be addressed in the final application?

Impact on the Fox River

- Are the impacts on the Fox River of shifting all of Waukesha's wastewater from that river to a Lake Michigan tributary clearly understood? Have downstream users of the Fox River, including local governments in Illinois, been fully informed of Waukesha's plans and the impacts of this shift?
- What data is the city of Waukesha depending on to assume that inflow and infiltration will help meet return flow "volume" requirements to a Lake Michigan tributary via a proposed diversion application that would send wastewater down the Fox River during high flow events? How does this proposed approach conform with the legal requirements of the Great Lakes Compact?

Impact on Underwood Creek

- What impacts might increased flows of Waukesha wastewater in Underwood Creek have on creek restoration efforts underway now by MMSD, the City of Wauwatosa, and others?
- Do the assumptions used about Underwood Creek's capacity to absorb more flow take into consideration extreme runoff events of the kind seen in the past two years (e.g. summer of 2008)?
- What effluent limits would Waukesha need to meet to discharge to a restored Underwood Creek that fully meets the "fishable and "swimmable" goals of the federal Clean Water Act? Who will be responsible for monitoring the effects of this effluent on downstream waterways?

1/8/2009

- Is Waukesha willing to meet state standards for mercury and chloride if it discharges to Underwood Creek? (Currently, it is granted variances for these two pollutants in its effluent.)
- Rather than using Underwood Creek for return flow, has Waukesha considered the pros and cons of returning wastewater through the MMSD system or discharging directly into Lake Michigan and if so, what are they?
- MMSD has spent over one hundred million dollars on flood management in the Milwaukee County Grounds and western Milwaukee areas. Wauwatosa has spent tens of millions of dollars to prevent flooding of their downtown area along the Menomonee River and acquired and demolished dozens of flood prone homes. How will this increased return flow to Underwood Creek protect or affect those past and future investments?
- What is the specific planned route for piping the return flow through Underwood Creek to Lake Michigan? How long would the pipes be and what would the economic and environmental impacts and costs be for that infrastructure? How long would it take for that system to be fully operational? Who would maintain it?

Energy Use

- How does energy consumption to pull water from the City of Milwaukee to Waukesha, treat it, and pump it back to Underwood Creek, compare to the energy now used to pump groundwater from groundwater wells?
- What would be the energy savings from a rigorous water conservation and water recycling program?

Radium

- Waukesha appears to be able to reduce radium levels in its water supply through eleven months of the year. What strategies is the City considering to reduce radium levels in its water to fully comply with the EPA standard that might be less expensive and complex than diverting Lake Michigan water?
- What is the status of negotiations with the Wisconsin Department of Justice over the non-compliance with state radium standards?