

Midwest Environmental ADVOCATES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 16, 2005

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Report Offers Solutions to Wisconsin Drought, Water-Quantity Issues

Madison, WI. Today a Wisconsin law center specializing in water and related environmental issues released a state-wide report suggesting water conservation policy changes pertaining to drought and water quantity concerns affecting key parts of the state, including communities across Southeastern Wisconsin and Brown County.

“We have analyzed and suggested specific policy changes so our laws encourage water conservation in line with Wisconsinites’ conservation values,” said Melissa K. Scanlan, Executive Director of Midwest Environmental Advocates.

In addition to the policy recommendations, the Report provides a Toolkit describing how to put together a conservation plan that is full of examples of Best Management Practices from around the United States.

The authors took the Report one step further and recommend specific water conservation actions for Waukesha in order to address its chronic water supply woes.

The group released the report in Waukesha and Green Bay, amidst support from local residents and community activists.

Commenting on the report’s Conservation Toolkit for Waukesha, Jodi Habush Sinykin, Of Counsel for Midwest Environmental Advocates stated, “We are interested in using this Toolkit to call residents and public officials’ attention to those conservation measures likely to prove most beneficial and to build support for their implementation throughout Waukesha and Waukesha County.” She added, “While city and utility officials continue to express a commitment to water conservation, we hope they use the Toolkit to follow through on promises made to date.”

Steven Schmuki, Waukesha attorney and President of the Waukesha Environmental Action League (WEAL), would like to see Waukesha putting some real effort into conservation

measures. Mr. Schmuki stated, “This Report and Toolkit identifies valuable measures that should be undertaken by the City and its Utility sooner rather than later.”

Another part of the state facing water supply problems is Brown County. “The fact that Central Brown County’s project involving up to 30 million gallons of Lake Michigan water per day did not require any conservation highlights the need for improvements in our laws,” stated Rebecca Katers, Executive Director of Clean Water Action Council of Northeast Wisconsin.

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Summary of Policy Recommendations –
Protecting Wisconsin’s Water: A Conservation Report and Toolkit:

To View the full report visit www.midwestadvocates.org.

- Water conservation programs and planning requirements, including those contemplated under the draft Annex Implementing Agreements, the Conserve Wisconsin Initiative, and the Groundwater Quantity Act, must include implementation and enforcement provisions to be effective.
- Wisconsin Statute § 281.35 should be amended to lower the threshold for triggering conservation requirements from a “water loss” of 2 million gallons per day to a new or increased water withdrawal in excess of 100,000 gallons per day.
- The Groundwater Advisory Committee, created pursuant to the Groundwater Quantity Act of 2004, should draft and recommend the promulgation of regulations requiring conservation for high capacity well permit holders.
- The Annex 2001 Implementing Agreements should require: 1) Conservation by an applicant prior to allowing new withdrawals of water over 100,000 gallons per day; 2) Implementation of state or provincial mandatory conservation programs prior to allowing an application for a diversion of water out of the Great Lakes Basin; and 3) Inclusion of a “stakeholder suit” provision, comparable to the Clean Water Act’s citizen suit provision, to encourage implementation of the conservation requirements.
- Local communities should utilize Smart Growth planning efforts and funding to develop comprehensive groundwater management and land use plans.
- The Public Service Commission should produce a uniform rule applying an increasing block rate structure for water utility rates across Wisconsin, enabling water use to be effectively priced to motivate water conservation measures that limit consumption and promote water reuse.