

Midwest Environmental ADVOCATES

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Contact: Melissa K. Scanlan
Report Author
608-628-2420 (cell)

Jodi Habush Sinykin
Report Author
414-507-0004 (cell)

Great Lakes Fuel the Economy and Quality of Life in Region, Report Recommends Great Lakes States Take Action to Protect Water

Milwaukee, WI. Today a non-profit and non-partisan law center specializing in water law released a regional report that focuses on the Great Lakes as a world class resource and identifies the means by which Wisconsin and other Great Lake states should commit to improving protections for the Great Lakes and the people, businesses and wildlife that rely upon them.

Midwest Environmental Advocates is releasing its report entitled *Realizing the Promise of the Great Lakes Compact: A Policy Guide for State Implementation* today at the Stewardship of Fresh Water in Southeastern Wisconsin conference taking place at the newly opened Pier 1-Discovery World Museum.

One of the sponsors of the event, Miller Brewing Company, concurs with the report's recognition of the Great Lakes as a resource to protect and soundly manage for the well-being of Wisconsin and the region. "As part of the world's second largest brewer, Miller Brewing Company recognizes that the Great Lakes Basin -- representing 20% of the world's fresh surface water supply -- is an economic benefit that must be sustained through sound water management practices," according to Julie Kubasa, Manager of Corporate Social Responsibility.

The report provides an overview of Great Lakes water management policy and outlines four specific areas where the Great Lakes states can bolster the Great Lakes Compact, which was signed by eight Great Lakes governors and two Canadian premiers on December 13, 2005. By enacting implementing legislation with the following improvements, the Great Lakes states will be in a better position to ensure the economic and environmental protection of the Great Lakes:

- 1. Eliminate the bottled water loophole that allows the diversion of Great Lakes water in containers sized 5.7 gallons or less;**
- 2. Strengthen the ban on diversions to ensure that diversions occur only in absolutely necessary situations;**
- 3. Set a meaningful regulatory level for in-basin users of Great Lakes water; and**
- 4. Require strong water conservation standards.**

“The policies recommended by the report are supported by many groups in Wisconsin and should help our region transition from the rust belt to the water belt in this century,” according to Melissa K. Scanlan, Executive Director of Midwest Environmental Advocates and co-author of the report.

In addition to these policy recommendations, the Report examines the water supply issues affecting southeastern Wisconsin, in particular, focusing on factual inaccuracies and misunderstandings surrounding the City of Waukesha’s perceived water problems.

Report co-author, highly respected United States Geological Survey hydrologist, James T. Krohelski, states, “As concern over the groundwater supply in Southeast Wisconsin has grown, several key studies have been misinterpreted by those seeking to obtain a water diversion from Lake Michigan. This report seeks to provide a clarification to some of these misinterpretations, which will contribute to the development of sound water management strategies.”

With Waukesha as the community most likely to apply for the next diversion of Great Lakes water out of the Great Lakes Basin, the report concludes with a number of critical policy questions that must be answered prior to state action on any diversion applications.

Allen Stasiewski, Vice President of the Waukesha County Environmental Action League, comments, “Given the critical importance of the Great Lakes and the precedent sure to be set by any diversion of Lake Michigan water to Waukesha, we believe Waukesha’s attention should be focused on how we can better manage the water resources we already have, not on seeking a water diversion with all its untold, uncalculated costs to Waukesha residents.” Mr. Stasiewski adds, “Just as Waukesha County has practiced living within its financial means, we must also live responsibly within our water means to ensure a better future for our neighbors, our children and ourselves.”

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FAST FACTS

- To view the full report, *Realizing the Promise of the Great Lakes Compact: A Policy Guide for State Implementation*, visit www.midwestadvocates.org.
- The report’s reviewers include: Steve Born, Professor Emeritus, UW-Madison; Mary Ericson, National Wildlife Federation; Noah Hall, Wayne State University Law School; George Kraft, Center for Watershed Science and Central Wisconsin Groundwater Center; James Krohelski, USGS; Peter McAvoy, 16th Street Community Health Center; Cheryl Mendoza, Alliance for the Great Lakes; James Olson, Olson, Bzdok & Howard, P.C.; Leigh Thomson, Polaris Institute; and Saul Wolf, Midwest Environmental Advocates.
- Midwest Environmental Advocates is Wisconsin’s first and only non-profit, public interest environmental law center. Midwest Environmental Advocates provides legal representation and community organizing assistance to groups working for clean air, clean water and clean government. For more information, go to www.midwestadvocates.org.