

# DNR done with review of Waukesha's Lake Michigan request

By [Don Behm](#) of the Journal Sentinel

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The state Department of Natural Resources will announce next month its decision on whether [Waukesha's application for Lake Michigan water](#) complies with a Great Lakes Protection Compact and could be approved by the other seven states bordering the lakes.

Five years after the City of Waukesha first asked the DNR to approve its request to switch to a Lake Michigan water supply, the department's review is over, officials said Friday.

The DNR will publish in June a draft report on the plan's environmental impacts as well as draft documents summarizing state regulators' opinion of the application's compliance with the 2008 protection compact, said Eric Ebersberger, the department's water use section chief in Madison. The application will be forwarded to the other seven Great Lakes states for their review and approval only if the Wisconsin DNR first signs off on it. The request must be unanimously approved by the eight states, under terms of the compact.

After the draft publications are released, the DNR will open the discussion to public comments on its analysis and the city's proposal for a period of 45 days or longer. The department has indicated it will schedule more than one public hearing at the end of the comment period.

Waukesha [Water Utility General Manager Dan Duchniak](#) confirmed Friday that Ebersberger notified him the department had "all the information they need from the city" and were completing work on the draft reports.

Waukesha is the first municipality in the United States located entirely outside the Great Lakes basin to request a diversion of water under terms of the protection compact.

Although the compact prohibits diversions of water outside the basin, there is one exception that fits Waukesha and hundreds of other communities: A municipality outside the basin can ask for Great Lakes water if it is in a county straddling the basin divide.

Waukesha County straddles the sub-continental divide between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins.

If the city's request is approved by each of the eight Great Lakes states, Waukesha would stop using deep wells drawing [radium-contaminated water](#) from sandstone once a new supply is available. Cost of a lake water supply is estimated at \$206 million.

In October 2013, the city submitted a revised application to the DNR that identified [Oak Creek as the preferred supplier](#) of lake water. Waukesha is seeking permission to divert up to an average of 10.1 million gallons of lake water a day by midcentury.

The compact requires a community diverting water from one of the lakes to return to the source an equivalent volume less an allowance for consumptive uses, such as bottling of beverages and evaporation during watering of lawns.

Waukesha proposed discharging its treated wastewater to the Root River, a lake tributary. The city has an option to purchase 60 acres on the east bank of the river, southeast of the intersection of Oakwood Road and S. 60th St. in Franklin.

<image001.jpg>

*Don Behm*

In its application for a Lake Michigan water supply, the City of Waukesha has proposed returning water to the lake by discharging treated wastewater to the Root River at S. 60th St. in Franklin.

<image002.gif>

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