

WAUKESHA WATER PLAN

Questions abound from regional representatives on Great Lakes diversion

By Matt Masterson

Freeman Staff

WAUKESHA — A collection of more than a dozen officials from across the United States and Canada gathered at Carroll University Wednesday to hear a preliminary briefing on Waukesha's application for Great Lakes water.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources led a tour of various sites across Waukesha and Milwaukee counties before members of the Great Lakes Regional Body and Compact Council held a Q& A session with local and state officials.

The events mark the beginning of a months-long review period by the two bodies — which include representatives of the eight Great Lakes states and two Canadian provinces — before the council either approves or denies Waukesha's request for water from Lake Michigan.

The city is looking to divert up to an annual average of 10.1 million gallons of Lake Michigan water per day for its water supply service area. The water would be obtained from the Oak Creek Water Utility and treated wastewater would be discharged back into the Root River.

Many of the questions posed to Mayor Shawn Reilly, **Waukesha Water utility** General Manager Dan Duchniak and DNR staff Wednesday centered around the city's expanded service area, its demand estimates and proposed return flow, and what would become of the city's current wells.

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Waukesha Mayor Shawn Reilly, left, and **Waukesha Water utility** General Manager Dan Duchniak take notes during a briefing for representatives from the Great Lakes Compact states and provinces on Wednesday at Carroll University.

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“We have asked the DNR for permission to put our wells into emergency standby mode, some of them,” Duchniak said. “So that if there were ever a compromise or a break in the line that came from Oak Creek, we would be able to turn those on in an emergency to maintain ... water flow.”

Wells not put into standby mode would be abandoned.

Duchniak said the utility has informed residents their water rates could double, and potentially triple, but added that would be true for any of the proposed alternatives.

The city has also added a legally binding agreement with municipalities in the expanded service area by which they must comply with conservation measures Waukesha currently has in place.

DNR Water Use Section Chief Eric Ebersberger said his department has already received supplemental questions directed by representatives of Michigan, Minnesota and Quebec. He plans to file formal written responses to those representatives.

The tour featured eight different stops — including various city of Waukesha wells and the Root River discharge location where the city would send treated water back into Lake Michigan.

During the briefing, the DNR’s review team detailed the process it used to review Waukesha’s application and ultimately determine the city’s plan is more environmentally sustainable than any other proposed alternative that had been reviewed.

Members of the council must unanimously approve Waukesha’s application for the city to receive Lake Michigan water. A decision is expected sometime this spring.

Following Wednesday’s briefing, the Regional Body and Compact Council has scheduled a public information hearing at 2 p.m. today, followed by a public hearing at 3 p.m. in Carroll University’s Shattuck Music Center, 218 N. East Ave.

For more information on the application process or the public hearing, visit www.waukeshadiversion.org.

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Shaili Pfeiffer of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources briefs representatives of the Great Lakes Compact states and provinces about the reasons why Lake Michigan water is the only effective solution for Waukesha’s water needs.

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