

Waukesha Water Utility begins Root River monitoring

By Mark Schaaf

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RACINE — Monitoring of the Root River began Thursday as officials gather baseline information before treated wastewater from Waukesha flows down the tributary.

A team of University of Wisconsin-Parkside professors and science students and U.S. Geological Survey researchers are gauging the river's water quality and biological conditions as they stand now, according to a Waukesha Water Utility news release.

It will still be several years until Waukesha's treated wastewater enters the Root. The plan is part of Waukesha's approved request for Lake Michigan water, which is tied up in litigation and has been vehemently opposed by some Racine officials.

The Waukesha Water Utility said it is starting monitoring several years ahead of what the Great Lakes Compact Council — the body that approved the city's diversion request — required. The council had dictated that Waukesha begin tests once it started piping water into the river.

“We're starting now so we will more fully understand the river's current condition so that when we borrow Lake Michigan water and return it to the river, we can protect water quality in the river and enhance the river's fisheries,” said Dan Duchniak, general manager of the utility.

In addition to the regular water quality monitoring, UW-Parkside will conduct fish monitoring in summer and fall, according to the news release. U.S. Geological Survey staff will measure stream flow and water quality parameters such as temperature, oxygen levels and water clarity.

Under the plan approved last year, Waukesha will divert an average of 8.2 million gallons of Lake Michigan water per day, returning all of the water to the lake via the Root.

Pending the outcome of legal challenges, Waukesha tentatively plans to begin construction of pipelines in 2019. One of the pipelines will discharge treated wastewater into the Root River at 60th Street in Franklin, just south of Oakwood Road.

Racine officials battled against the plan for some time amid concerns about the impact on the Root and the precedent it sets for other communities to get lake water.

The Waukesha Water Utility argues the water discharged into the river will be clean and improve the river's health.

http://journaltimes.com/news/local/waukesha-water-utility-begins-root-river-monitoring/article_f5b8a20a-0bfc-50ad-8791-d12525b3694c.html