



# Waukesha Water Utility

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## **Waukesha Mayor praises agreement to pass of Great Lakes Compact this week**

Waukesha Mayor Larry Nelson commended the Legislature for its agreement to pass the Great Lakes Compact this week, saying "the bill was vital to protect the Great Lakes and vital to the citizens of Waukesha."

"The Legislature's Compact implementation bill defines the process and standards for Waukesha to apply for Lake Michigan water," Nelson said. The most important requirement, Nelson said, is the one to return water back to the lake after use to protect lake levels.

"Lake water – unlike groundwater – can be recycled back to the source," the mayor said. "That's what makes Lake Michigan the most environmentally sustainable and responsible option for Waukesha's water supply."

Waukesha is currently examining ways it could recycle the water to the lake by using a tributary river.

"Our current use of the deep aquifer is unsustainable," Nelson said. "Years of overpumping by all of southeastern Wisconsin, including Milwaukee, and the geological limits on the water recharge, mean we must find a new water supply. We have pulled up groundwater with contaminants so high that it is essentially salt water. We have pumped water with temperatures as high as 98 degrees. And SEWRPC is about to report that some groundwater cells could go dry within five years."

"The implementation bill will provide clear guidelines and procedures for communities like Waukesha to apply for Lake Michigan water if they return the water to the lake," Nelson said. "It also will protect our Great Lakes from raids by other states who would not return the water."

The mayor praised Governor Doyle and legislative committee chairs for their work to reach consensus on the legislation. "Governor Doyle, Rep. Gunderson, Sen. Miller and the DNR all deserve credit for their hard work in making this happen. Sen. Kedzie also deserves credit

for his hard work and we appreciated the support of County Executive Vrakas," he said. "Amendments by the Senate and Assembly both add more precise definitions of key terms and helpful clarifications about the application process."

The mayor said any Waukesha application will be a model application that will be seen as a positive precedent. "A Waukesha application would prove that the Compact can work," he said, helping encourage other Great Lakes states to pass the Compact.

Nelson said "Waukesha is proud of our leadership on water issues, including conservation. I've been told we have the most comprehensive water conservation plan in the Midwest. We have totally banned daytime lawn sprinkling in order to prevent evaporation and reduce demand. We have recently reduced our water use by 7.5%."

The mayor added that "We were also the first community in Wisconsin to get state approval for water rates that increase as use increases. But conservation alone cannot solve the water supply problems brought on by years of overpumping by all of southeastern Wisconsin. We need a new water supply and Lake Michigan would be the most sustainable choice. This legislation will allow us to pursue that option."

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