



Waukesha Water Utility

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Waukesha strengthens its water conservation plan *City continues its leadership in efficiency efforts*

The Waukesha Water Utility Commission approved an update of its Water Conservation Plan Thursday night to increase its conservation efforts. The utility's goal is to achieve 365 million gallons of measurable water savings by 2050, or an estimated 10% of the total water that would have been used if not for conservation.

"No matter where we get our water from, we must implement cost-effective conservation measures to protect the environment and reduce costs," Commission President Dan Warren said. "We are proud to continue our longstanding water conservation leadership role in the Midwest."

Waukesha is seeking to switch from groundwater to Lake Michigan water because continued use of its groundwater resources is environmentally unsustainable. Its current deep aquifer supply has already declined 500 to 600 feet. In addition, the levels of contaminants in its wells are increasing and it is under a court order to be in full compliance with federal radium standards within the next six years.

"Water conservation alone cannot solve our water quality problems. We need a new source of water to provide healthy, sustainable and reliable water to our community. But water conservation is an important component in meeting our needs," General Manager Dan Duchniak said.

Waukesha adopted a conservation plan in 2006. Since that time, it has already adopted the first daytime ban on sprinkling, the first conservation rate structure and the first toilet rebate program in the state, along with public education and outreach. "We are building on our initial water conservation efforts by increasing the resources necessary to achieve our new goals," according to Technical Services Manager Nancy Quirk.

The updated plan calls for additional rebates or grants, additional reductions in excessive or inefficient outdoor irrigation, continued use of conservation pricing to reward customers with low water use, and increased collaboration with stakeholders and customers. As an example, the utility is proposing to increase its rebate for replacement of inefficient toilets to \$100. Residential customers who took advantage of the city's existing \$25 rebate are estimated to be saving an average of 9,000 to 11,000 gallons of water per year, depending on the household size.

Quirk said the utility now has information on its biggest users in its industrial, commercial and residential classes, allowing it to target specific efforts to those customers, including audits and surveys.

The updated plan is focused on implementation strategies for the next five years, but it will keep the utility on track to increase its efficiency by 200,000 gallons per day by 2016, 500,000 gallons per day by 2030 and 1 million gallons per day by 2050, when the utility's service area is estimated to be completely built out.

The update also ensures compliance with a new Department of Natural Resources rule NR852, which sets standards for communities outside of the Great Lakes Basin, such as Waukesha, that apply to use Great Lakes water.

The Waukesha Water Utility worked with its stakeholders to complete the plan. Members included residential, commercial, industrial, and public institution (parks and schools) customers, who provided valuable assistance in identifying the top conservation and efficiency measures to meet Waukesha's water conservation goals. The plan also incorporated input from an environmental stakeholder, Clean Wisconsin.

Duchniak noted that a switch to Great Lakes water is the most effective water efficiency measure of all. "With Great Lakes water, we can recycle the water by returning it to the source after use and treatment. That is not possible with groundwater," he said.

Quirk said the new plan will be added to the water utility web site soon, along with other changes to the site.

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