



## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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## **Request for reconsideration of water approval is unfounded**

### **Waukesha meets requirement to borrow and return Lake Michigan water, Compact Council found**

There is no new information to support a request for a new hearing on the approval of Waukesha's request to borrow and return Great Lakes water, according to Waukesha Mayor Shawn Reilly.

"A cities group is asking for a new hearing on the approval by the eight states of the Great Lakes Council in June. That Council unanimously approved our request to borrow and return Lake Michigan water under the Great Lakes Compact," Reilly said. "The claims by the cities group were thoroughly reviewed during that rigorous approval process. There is nothing new in the request by the cities that hasn't already been considered by the Great Lakes states and provinces."

Reilly said his city's application underwent six years of review by teams of experts in the state of Wisconsin, seven other Great Lakes states and two Canadian provinces. "This was a scientific, legal and non-partisan review, as required by the Compact, by the states and provinces that wrote the law. I don't see any reason to think the Compact Council will change its determination that we meet the legal requirements, and will actually benefit a Great Lakes tributary and the watershed," he said.

"It is hard to understand why other cities – that certainly know the importance of safe drinking water – would choose to challenge a project that will provide safe, sustainable drinking water to our city's citizens without causing harm to the Great Lakes," Reilly added. "If there is a threat to the Compact's protection of the Great Lakes, it would be forcing the Great Lakes states to needlessly defend against a legal challenge, if the cities decide to pursue such a challenge."



The Great Lakes Compact, which became law in 2008, generally prohibits water from being pumped beyond the surface divide of the Great Lakes. However, communities in counties that straddle the divide, like Waukesha, can apply for water under the Compact. A community only qualifies if it shows it has no other reasonable water supply alternative and recycles the water back to the Great Lakes after use and treatment.

Waukesha needs a new water supply because the recharge of its aquifer by rain and snow is limited by a layer of rock above the watershed. Waukesha's water is also contaminated with naturally-occurring radium, a carcinogen.

“Waukesha will not harm the Great Lakes. We will borrow less than 1/1,000,000th of 1% of Great Lakes water. We will return approximately 100% of the volume of water that we withdraw,” the mayor said. “In fact, our current groundwater wells pull some of the water they pump out of the Lake Michigan watershed. That means a switch to Lake Michigan surface water will actually increase the amount of water in the Great Lakes watershed by more than 500,000,000 gallons per year. There will be few, if any, other communities in straddling counties that can make the same case.”

Reilly said the approval by the Great Lakes states also found that returning the water to Lake Michigan via the Root River will provide environmental benefits, including increasing flow for salmon and other fish. “Almost all wastewater plants discharge to rivers and streams. The only thing unusual about our discharge is that we have much higher levels of treatment than all but a handful of other communities in our state. Our return flow water is actually cleaner than the water in the Root River.”

Reilly encouraged people to review the findings contained in the unanimous approval by the Compact Council at <http://www.waukeshadiversion.org/media/1825/waukesha-final-decision-of-compact-council-6-21-16.pdf>, including the findings that Waukesha has no reasonable water supply alternative, on the benefits to the Root River and the limited precedent of Waukesha's approval.

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