

GREAT WATER ALLIANCE PROJECT

Project meets 50% completion deadline

City: Estimated \$286 million construction is on time, on budget

By Nikki Brahm
nbrahm@conley.net.com
262-513-2651

WAUKESHA – Since construction kicked off in late 2020 for the Great Water Alliance project, the

city of Waukesha announced Thursday that it has met its legal construction deadline, officially completing 50% of construction for the project.

The project will allow a new water supply from Lake Michigan

to be piped from Milwaukee Water Works to Waukesha. After use and treatment, the water will be returned to the lake via the Root River.

According to the city, they are required to comply with federal

drinking water standards for radium by Sept. 1, 2023.

The city also had a construction deadline to complete 50% of the new water supply project by May 31, 2022.

In a Thursday press release,

Mayor Shawn Reilly announced that construction crews have completed 21 of the 36 miles of water supply and return flow pipelines.

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“The pipelines are actually 56.3 percent complete, but the 50 percent compliance mark is determined by the percentage of overall construction costs that has been billed by contractors,” Reilly said in a statement.

To comply with the court order, the city reported that a certification was submitted Thursday to the Wisconsin Department of Justice and the Department of Natural Resources.

Reilly reported that the project is on time and on budget.

“We’re closing in on bringing a new supply of water to Waukesha in 2023 that will be safe and reliable for the long term,” he said. “Today, our contractors officially notified the Waukesha Water Utility that we reached the halfway mark at the end of January. This is a significant milestone with

our project. If we had not gotten to 50 percent in time, we would have had to spend up to \$5 million on studies and temporary radium treatment facilities that won’t be needed after we switch to Great Lakes water. I am proud that our team avoided this expense for ratepayers.”

Waukesha Water Utility General Manager Dan Duchniak told The Freeman he is happy that they were able to save \$5 million by meeting the 50% completion deadline. Overall, he said the city has been cognizant of the new water supply’s cost and they are working hard to keep costs to residents as low as possible.

In 2020, the Waukesha Water Utility notified Waukesha residents that they will see nearly a 25% rate increase by 2023 due to the project. The first rate increase, 15.88%, went into effect in February 2021. The second rate increase, which will total 7.61%, will go into

effect once the project reaches certain criteria, likely this spring to early summer, Duchniak said.

Project background

Waukesha’s current groundwater is contaminated by radium and also severely depleted. Construction costs include the pipelines, the reservoirs in Waukesha, booster pump stations in Waukesha and Milwaukee and the return flow pump station in Waukesha.

“A significant challenge was the time it took to switch the design from an Oak Creek water supply to one from the Milwaukee Water Works,” Reilly said. “But the deal we negotiated with Milwaukee in 2017 will save the average residential ratepayer more than \$200 per year, due to a shorter pipeline and lower annual payments to their utility. That will keep more than \$4 million per year in the Waukesha economy.”