Waukesha, Wisconsin: Putting the Great Lakes Compact to the Test

Nate Drag
Alliance for the Great Lakes
Outline

1. The Alliance for the Great Lakes
2. Great Lakes – A Precious Resource
3. Waukesha, WI – A Precedent Setting Diversion Application
4. Each Great Lakes Governor has a role to play
5. Role for state legislators
Our mission at the Alliance for the Great Lakes is to conserve and restore the world's largest freshwater resource using policy, education and local efforts, ensuring a healthy Great Lakes and clean water for generations of people and wildlife.
THE GREAT LAKES ARE THE LARGEST SURFACE FRESHWATER SYSTEM IN THE WORLD

...including 18% of the world’s supply.

THE GREAT LAKES HOLD 5,500 CUBIC MILES
...including 90% of North America’s supply.

THE GREAT LAKES PROVIDE DRINKING WATER TO OVER 40 MILLION PEOPLE
...including 1 in 10 Americans
...and 1 in 4 Canadians.
Diverting across the divide

Waukesha is asking Wisconsin for permission to divert Lake Michigan water across the subcontinental divide. Potential suppliers are Milwaukee, Oak Creek and Racine. If the state agrees, Waukesha must obtain the approval of each of the other seven Great Lakes states before it could buy lake water.
Waukesha’s Diversion Request

• Radium contaminated groundwater – current source of water
• Under a court order to comply with EPA radium limits by 2018
• Currently using approximately 6 million gallons of water per day on average
• Requesting 16.7 million gallons per day max capacity from Lake Michigan, 10.1 million gallons per day on average
• Extended Service Area – Covers areas beyond the City of Waukesha
This Decision Will Set a Precedent for the Compact
Great Lakes Legislative Caucus Webinars

The Great Lakes Legislative Caucus held two webinars on this subject:

• Informational webinar, online here: 
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYSfrehMeAY

• Opposing presentations by the City of Waukesha and by the Compact Implementation Coalition, online here: 
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdT6e1f65Pl
Key concerns about Waukesha’s application

1. Waukesha wants to divert Great Lakes water for towns that don’t need it and have not requested water
2. Diverting Great Lakes water should be a last resort
3. Waukesha failed to demonstrate that it needs Lake Michigan water
4. Waukesha has a feasible alternative to meet its water needs
5. Waukesha’s plan to return water to the Great Lakes could damage the Root River
What’s Next?

**Waukesha Application**

**DNR approval?**
- Yes
  - Yes, diversion approved.
- No
  - No
  - **Regional approval?**
    - All 8 Compact states must approve!
      - Yes, diversion approved.
      - Yes, diversion approved (with conditions)
      - No

**WE ARE HERE!**

Waukesha must revise its application
Each Great Lakes Governor Gets a Say in the Waukesha Diversion Application Decision
Role for State Legislators

Now:

• Briefings for your colleagues
• State Resolutions
• Comments to your Governor and Administration
• Letters to the Editor or other Media Outreach
• Great Lakes Legislative Caucus Policy Workshop
Questions?

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