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PRESS RELEASE

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Waukesha obtains DNR authorization for Lake Michigan water supply

Construction underway, valves to open in 2023

(WAUKESHA) The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) today announced that it has issued the diversion approval to the City of Waukesha. The approval allows Waukesha to use and return water from Lake Michigan in accordance with other approvals and permits that have been issued for the project.

“The DNR’s action implements the approval decisions made by the Great Lakes governors and premiers in June of 2016,” said Waukesha Mayor Shawn Reilly. “At that time, the DNR said it would not actually authorize the start of pumping water from Milwaukee until we had obtained the additional federal, state and local permits we need to build and operate the program. That process has been completed and construction is underway.”

Reilly added, “Our project will provide safe, reliable water for the city’s residents and businesses for the long term. It is the only sustainable way to solve the problem of radium contamination in our current deep aquifer water supply.”

Under the program, which is dubbed the Great Water Alliance, water will be piped from the Milwaukee Water Works to Waukesha, starting in 2023. After use and treatment, 100% of the volume from Milwaukee will be recycled back to a Lake Michigan tributary, the Fox River. That ensures no impact on lake levels, the mayor said.

“Even though we will return the same amount of water to the lake, our program is considered a diversion of water under the Great Lake Compact,” Reilly said. “That means the governors and premiers of the other Great Lakes states and provinces had to agree it was our only reasonable water supply solution. And, in 2016, they did.”



The DNR action governs the volumes of water flowing to and from Waukesha, regulates the water quality monitoring plan for the Root River, and addresses other issues. But the DNR had said it would not issue the diversion approval until it was assured that all the other federal, state, and local permits needed for the project would be issued.

“It has taken five years to get the more than 80 permits we need, including from the communities our pipelines run through. I want to thank all the utility employees and contractors whose hard work made that possible, as well as the cooperation of our neighboring municipalities, state regulators and federal agencies,” the mayor said.

“During the five years since approval, we also determined the best routes, designed the project, hired contractors and obtained low-interest government financing,” he added. “The major bids have all been let and construction is now in high gear. We are well on our way toward opening the valves in 2023.”

Reilly noted that the project is pumping millions of dollars into the local economy, providing jobs in construction and other industries.

Waukesha Water Utility General Manager Dan Duchniak said Waukesha has emphasized the need to keep the public informed about the details of the construction project. “Whether you are along the pipeline construction route or just interested in the project, you can go to our website: greatwateralliance.com. You can look at an interactive route map, sign up for our newsletter, and find out what’s going on *In Your Area*,” he said.

For more information, contact:

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