

Baldwin visits Great Water Alliance site

Waukesha water switch expected in late summer

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WAUKESHA — As the Great Water Alliance enters the final year of its project to switch Waukesha's water from groundwater to Lake Michigan water, Wisconsin U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin took a tour of the construction site Tuesday to see progress on the construction firsthand.

Baldwin, along with Mayor Shawn Reilly, toured the site including the new water tower and two ground-level storage tanks that will hold 8.6 million gallons of water each.

These parts of the project have received federal funds, according to the Great Water Alliance.

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Mayor Shawn Reilly, Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Waukesha Water Utility General Manager Dan Duchniak in the new booster pumping station.



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Workers and leaders of the Great Water Alliance after a tour through the site Tuesday.

Baldwin

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"This is a long partnership that I've had with the mayor and the city of Waukesha," Baldwin said. "...What you're seeing right now is the site which is the key to the solution and I was proud to partner in many of the steps along the way."

The project will end the city's use of groundwater, which is severely depleted and unsustainable for long-term use. The current water supply is also contaminated with naturally occurring radium, according to the Great Water Alliance.

"We appreciate the support that Sen.

Baldwin and our entire congressional delegation have given to the project over the years," Reilly said. "We have received federal financial help for key elements of our new infrastructure, as along with long-term low-interest loans."

The Great Water Alliance project started in 2016 and is the biggest capital project in city history. Dan Duchniak, general manager of the Waukesha Water Utility, said the Great Water Alliance is grateful they submitted their bids when they did because costs could have been 30-40% higher today with inflation and supply chain issues.

"It was like the stars aligned," Duchniak said.

He said this project has built-in efficiencies, which is important as the

Water Utility struggles to find staff.

"We used to get, if we advertised for a position, we'd have over 100 applications for one position," Duchniak explained to Baldwin. "Now we're lucky to get five, and three of those aren't qualified."

Earlier in the day, Baldwin met with union workers in Milwaukee to celebrate restored pension benefits and also met with the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office to discuss public safety, according to Baldwin's Twitter account.

"It's so great to see the progress and know that a forever solution is around the corner for the residents of Waukesha," Baldwin said.

Waukesha will switch to Lake Michigan water in late summer, the Great Water Alliance estimates.