

GREAT WATER ALLIANCE™

WAUKESHA WATER SUPPLY PROGRAM GETS NEW IDENTITY, WEBSITE “Great Water Alliance” Conveys Water Program’s Regional Cooperation

WAUKESHA, Wis. (March 1, 2017) — Dan Duchniak, General Manager of the Waukesha Water Utility revealed a new name, [website](#) and an eye-catching logo for the city’s new water plan at Mayor Shawn Reilly’s Celebrate Waukesha breakfast meeting of more than 100 community leaders this morning. The Great Water Alliance describes the city’s program to access drinking water from Lake Michigan and return the same amount to the lake under [terms unanimously approved last June](#) by the eight governors who make up the Great Lakes Compact Council.

“When French explorers first reached the shores of Wisconsin, they asked the native people what the lake was called. Their response was, ‘michigami,’ which in the original Ojibwe means ‘Great Water,’” said Duchniak. “Now, more than three centuries later, a groundbreaking new water supply program is poised to translate michigami into great water again...this time for the people of Waukesha.”

The Great Water Alliance program will involve a pair of new underground pipelines. Current plans call for the first to begin at a pumping station in Oak Creek, carrying water from Lake Michigan some 20 miles through the communities of Franklin, Muskego and New Berlin on its way to Waukesha for use as the city’s water supply. After use, the second pipeline will return treated water from the Clean Water Plant in Waukesha, that currently discharges into the Fox River, to an outfall point in Franklin that empties into the Root River, flowing ultimately back to Lake Michigan.

Three possible routes are currently under consideration by the Great Water Alliance. A final pipeline path will be identified later this year, after a series of listening sessions have been held in partner communities. Planning is currently underway, with construction scheduled to begin in 2020 and completion slated for 2023.

Large public works projects — especially those involving drinking water — can be emotionally charged and the passions evoked can lead to a blurring of the line between myth and fact. The website provides comprehensive yet easy-to-understand [answers to a variety of questions about](#) the program and is designed to be continually updated as design and construction projects advance. The website also provides links to [background documents](#) to help the public more fully understand the importance of Waukesha’s program for a safe, sustainable drinking water source.

“The amount of information generated and compiled in the past 15 years is truly staggering, and serves to remind the world of the high standards to which the application was held,” said Dan Duchniak, General Manager of the Waukesha Water Utility. “Now, as the Great Water Alliance works to create a safe and sustainable supply of clean drinking water for Waukesha, we pledge to keep the citizens and communities who will be affected fully informed. The website is intended not only to educate, but to inspire.”

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The logo for the Great Water Alliance depicts three sections of interconnected pipes looping together symbolizing how water from Lake Michigan will be used, cleaned, and then returned to the lake. The website will be a clearinghouse for the latest information about the program and how it affects residents and businesses in Waukesha, Muskego, New Berlin, Franklin, Oak Creek, Caledonia and Racine.

“The Great Water Alliance is a world-class program that will become a model for safe and sustainable drinking water programs,” said Nicole Spieles, Program Manager for Greeley and Hansen, the engineering firm overseeing the design and construction of the program. “The name, logo and website all convey the importance of this regional, cooperative program.

“The City of Waukesha had a clear objective when it began investigating alternatives to its increasingly depleted water supply more than a decade ago: identify the single most sustainable and environmentally responsible option. The Great Lakes Compact Council agreed that Lake Michigan was the best choice,” said Duchniak. “As the first community to prove it qualifies for an exception under the Compact’s straddling counties provision, we’re keenly aware of our obligation not only to our neighbors in the area, but to the entire Great Lakes basin.”

Waukesha’s primary water source is currently a deep aquifer that has dropped hundreds of feet. A layer of shale above the aquifer restricts recharge from rain and snow. Radium levels and other contaminants increase as water is pumped out by wells and water levels drop. In the late 1980s, the state of Wisconsin implemented strict new regulations for radium levels in drinking water. Similar measures were enacted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2000. Long-term exposure to radium is linked to increased risk of cancer. A new, sustainable water source was needed.

After more than ten years spent studying more than a dozen alternatives, it was determined that the only reasonable solution — for both the environment and for Waukesha — is to borrow water from Lake Michigan, then return it as clean water via the Root River. The Great Lakes Compact Council’s approval represented the culmination of more than ten years of cooperative action involving the Compact Council, governmental agencies at the state and local levels, private sector consultants, concerned citizens, and the City of Waukesha.

“While the Waukesha Water Utility is leading the charge, this initiative has involved – and will continue to involve – the Governors and Premiers of the Great Lakes states and provinces, environmentalists, governmental agencies at the state and local levels, private sector consultants, and the citizens of both Waukesha and our partner communities,” added Reilly.

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