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## **REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION CONFIRMS THAT LAKE MICHIGAN WATER IS BEST FOR WAUKESHA, ENVIRONMENT**

*SEWRPC finds that Lake Michigan water for Waukesha does not harm Milwaukee economically*

The Waukesha Water Utility today applauded the approval of the *Regional Water Supply Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin* by the Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC). The plan is the result of five years of study and deliberation by some of the region's leading water analysts.

Among the critical findings of the plan is that a sustainable Lake Michigan water supply for the City of Waukesha will have fewer adverse environmental impacts than all of the other studied alternatives.

"I'm confident that SEWRPC has addressed the critical environmental topics associated with water supply in southeast Wisconsin," said Dan Warren, President of the Waukesha Water Utility Commission. "It was important that they engaged an independent, unbiased, qualified group of experts to study the region's future water supply and that the group has reached the same conclusion for the City of Waukesha that the Utility's team of experts has."

Among other things, the SEWRPC study compared alternatives, including the use of Lake Michigan water (with return of the treated water back to the lake) by Waukesha, as well as the use of deep or shallow groundwater. The plan adopted by SEWRPC concludes that the Lake Michigan alternative "*offers advantages related to a greater improvement in the deep aquifer long-term sustainability, reductions in chloride discharges to the surface waters, and improvement in groundwater-derived baseflow inputs to the surface water system.*" In short, SEWRPC found that the use of Lake Michigan was better for the long-term health of the surface waters and groundwater of southeast Wisconsin.

"SEWRPC's recommendation for Waukesha to switch to a Lake Michigan water supply was reviewed and confirmed by a diverse group of 32 experts with a variety of interests in the region," added Dan Duchniak, General Manager of the Waukesha

Water Utility. "Along with the extensive analysis done by the Water Utility, it is clear that Lake Michigan is the best answer for Waukesha, for the region and for the environment."

Opponents of Waukesha's proposed use of Lake Michigan water had argued that it would put Milwaukee at a perceived economic disadvantage. SEWRPC's analysis of future water costs makes clear that no such competitive disadvantage would exist. In studying this important point, the plan concludes that "*[n]o matter which alternative is selected there will be no incentive for a developer, business or resident to move from Milwaukee to Waukesha based on the cost of water.*"

The approved SEWRPC plan also confirms a number of the additional points made in Waukesha's current application to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for Great Lakes water. Its plan concluded that a Lake Michigan water supply has fewer adverse environmental impacts and is more sustainable than any of the alternatives considered. Like the SEWRPC study, the application indicates that a Lake Michigan water supply would do the following:

- Manage water resources so they are available for future generations;
- Contribute to the recovery of groundwater and surface waters, including waters of the Great Lakes Basin;
- Ensure a long-term adequate supply of potable water;
- Provide environmental benefits to the Great Lakes ecosystem by increasing flows in Underwood Creek, restoring aquatic and wildlife habitat in the watercourse that returns water to Lake Michigan;
- Reduce energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions associated with the water supply;
- Eliminate the amount of salt released to the environment from softening of hard groundwater; and
- Reduce the release of radium to the environment.

Both Warren and Duchniak stressed the important role that SEWRPC plays in southeast Wisconsin in providing unbiased information and guidance to communities in southeast Wisconsin.

"SEWRPC's primary role in studying the water supply issue is to help communities collectively ensure the long-term health and prosperity of the people who live, work and recreate in southeast Wisconsin," said Warren. "It's reassuring that the plan approved by SEWRPC concludes that a Great Lakes water for the City of Waukesha is best for the region. This conclusion by the independent body is consistent with the City's findings and should conclusively answer any questions about which water supply alternative is the best for all of us."

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