

# Myth vs REALITY

The Compact Implementation Coalition (Coalition) collectively represents the voices of tens of thousands of Wisconsinites in advocating to protect the Great Lakes. We do this by maintaining the spirit and the letter of the federally ratified Great Lakes Compact. We are deeply concerned that all people and communities have access to clean, safe drinking water - including Waukesha, Wisconsin. When Waukesha's application is examined legally and technically by outside experts, it falls

far below the basic standards set forth in the Compact. The Coalition commissioned an independent study in response to the City of Waukesha's failure to thoroughly explore alternatives to diverting water from Lake Michigan, described as the Non-Diversion Solution. Waukesha Water Utility General Manager Dan Duchniak issued the following misleading statements regarding the Non-diversion Solution. Here are our responses:

## Myth

"The positions [presented in the Non-Diversion Solution] are nothing new and are incomplete. [The Coalition has] repeatedly made these same suggestions to the DNR throughout its five-year review."

## REALITY

The Non-Diversion Solution (NDS) is to treat groundwater for radium to supply the City of Waukesha's existing service area. **THE COALITION IS PROVIDING INFORMATION THE DNR DID NOT SEE IN WAUKESHA'S APPLICATION, INFORMATION WAUKESHA NEVER SHARED WITH THE DNR.** The Coalition's report was created by third-party engineering and economics experts and vetted by senior legal and technical staff at more than 10 local, state and regional environmental organizations. The NDS is available for the general public to read at any time.

## REALITY

The NDS has never been analyzed before now because **WAUKESHA FAILED TO INCLUDE THIS ALTERNATIVE IN ITS APPLICATION.** Rather, Waukesha only included unreasonable water supply alternatives so it could make a Great Lakes diversion seem more reasonable. Waukesha's local water supply alternative involved foolishly drilling new wells near sensitive environmental areas. The NDS shows there will be **NO ADDITIONAL DRAWDOWN TO THE DEEP AQUIFER** (the deep aquifer would actually continue to rise), and **NO IMPACT TO SURFACE WATERS OR WETLANDS** because this alternative involves **NO NEW GROUNDWATER WELLS**, deep or shallow.

## Myth

"[The Coalition's] water supply proposals were analyzed and found to be inadequate, causing significant adverse environmental impacts to groundwater, wetlands and surface waters."

## Myth

"Although the Coalition....puts a heavy emphasis on costs, the DNR's conclusion that Lake Michigan is Waukesha's only reasonable water supply alternative is primarily based on environmental impacts."

## REALITY

The NDS is the best possible solution in regard to cost AND environmental impacts. Ask any Waukesha ratepayer and they will tell you **COST IS IMPORTANT, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE PERSONAL DIVERSION COSTS ARE SO GREAT.** Most residents will see a \$900 average annual water bill by 2024 for a diversion "solution" that does more harm than good.

## REALITY

Continued groundwater use is a reasonable alternative and does not cause further drawdown of the deep aquifer when based on a reasonable estimate of future water use. **WAUKESHA CHERRY-PICKS DATA AND TWISTS THE DEFINITION OF A COMMUNITY IN NEED TO INFLATE ITS FUTURE WATER DEMAND.** The rationale driving Waukesha's entire application is backward. The city requested water from the Great Lakes BEFORE it had ever demonstrated need as a community. In an attempt to manufacture this need, Waukesha has twisted the definition of a community in need to include other communities outside of its municipal boundaries that have indicated that they do not need drinking water from the City of Waukesha.

### Myth

"The DNR's draft technical review and environmental impact statement found that groundwater use is not reasonable, due to environmental impacts, even if Waukesha were to use less water than what is forecast."

## REALITY

The City of Waukesha is trying to confuse the public. A highly regarded engineering firm developed the non-diversion water supply alternative. **THE ANALYSIS IS NEW, AND BASED ON MORE RECENT DATA.** Unlike our analysis, the City's analysis included a water supply area that is 40% larger than its current supply area, which is inconsistent with the Compact. Like our analysis, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission also concluded drawdown to the aquifer would stabilize, even with the expanded water supply area Waukesha included in its application.

### Myth

"The Coalition's positions were examined and refuted in prior analyses by the City of Waukesha and by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission."

### Myth

"[The Coalition's] push for Waukesha to continue using existing wells and depleted groundwater resources is inconsistent with Wisconsin's groundwater law, which puts Waukesha in one of only two groundwater management areas in the state. [The Coalition's] proposal does nothing to address the fact that the groundwater drawdown is hundreds of feet below the levels that require groundwater management."

## REALITY

Waukesha's groundwater resources are not depleted. Recent data show that the water level in the deep aquifer has rebounded around Waukesha's seven deep groundwater wells by an average of 70-100 feet since the year 2000. Waukesha's assumptions about groundwater drawdown are based on reports that are 10 years old. **WAUKESHA IS RELYING ON OUTDATED MODELING.** We did not have adequate models at the time groundwater management areas were established; now we do. **GROUNDWATER LEVELS ARE RISING AND ARE SUSTAINABLE UNTIL AT LEAST 2050.**

## REALITY

Waukesha is relying on certain provisions of state planning law **TO INCLUDE COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE THE CURRENT CITY LIMITS THAT DO NOT CURRENTLY NEED WATER FROM WAUKESHA.** This is in **DIRECT CONFLICT WITH THE FEDERALLY RATIFIED GREAT LAKES COMPACT.** The Great Lakes Compact does not allow for diversions based on possible future need of expanded service areas. The DNR has not made any final decisions regarding the Wisconsin water supply planning laws the City is referencing.

### Myth

"[The Coalition's] position is also inconsistent with Wisconsin water supply planning laws, as the DNR has indicated on several occasions."

## REALITY

Residents, businesses and entire communities can be connected to a sewer system without ever connecting to a municipal water supply system. **LIMITING THE WATER SUPPLY SERVICE AREA TO THE CITY OF WAUKESHA WILL NOT FORCE ANYONE CURRENTLY CONNECTED TO THE SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM TO DISCONNECT OR PREVENT ANYONE FROM CONNECTING TO THE SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM IN THE FUTURE.** If the diversion is approved, many residents and businesses will be pay thousands of dollars to hook up to the new municipal water supply infrastructure, something Waukesha never mentions in its application or reveals to residents living in the expanded service area.

### Myth

"[The Coalition's] proposal would force area residents to be removed from sewer service areas that have been in place for decades."

## REALITY

The NDS report explains that the regional aquifer has been rebounding since the year 2000. **THE NDS USES THE BEST DATA AVAILABLE FROM THE USGS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THIS TREND IS REFLECTIVE OF CURRENT AND PREDICTED REGIONAL WATER USE IN SOUTHEAST WISCONSIN AND NORTHERN ILLINOIS.** Recommendations in the NDS suggest re-running SEWRPC's regional models from 2005 in order to incorporate the newest and most complete data so we can take stock of our current situation and make better decisions going forward.

### Myth

"[The Coalition's] proposal also does not address the impacts of regional water use. Waukesha's primary water supply is affected by the densely populated area of southeastern Wisconsin and northeastern Illinois. To not examine cumulative and future water use is environmentally irresponsible and inconsistent with effective planning."

### Myth

"Water supply systems involve investments of hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure that must last for generations. Decisions should not be made on short-term trends or impacts, but on resources that are sustainable and reliable for the long term."

## REALITY

More than 40 other communities in Wisconsin have had the same radium problem as Waukesha and chose to treat their water and sensibly invest their residents' money in the systems they currently have. **THESE COMMUNITIES HAVE NOT NEEDED A DIVERSION TO SUPPLY THEIR RESIDENTS WITH CLEAN AND SAFE DRINKING WATER.** Waukesha has ignored the example set by these 40 Wisconsin communities and has instead proposed a more costly and controversial alternative that violates the Great Lakes Compact.

## REALITY

The NDS drills no new wells so there are no additional impacts to surface water, such as nearby wetlands. **Conversely, IF WAUKESHA TAKES WATER FROM LAKE MICHIGAN AND DUMPS ITS TREATED WASTE WATER BACK INTO THE ROOT RIVER, THERE WILL BE LIKELY IMPACTS TO WATER QUALITY AND AQUATIC.** Flows will decreased dramatically in the Fox River affecting aquatic life, recreation and water supplies. **downstream Again, Waukesha is trying to confuse the public by setting up a false choice between having a clean water supply or harming the local environment to make the Great Lakes diversion seem more reasonable.**

### Myth

"Waukesha will return approximately 100% of the volume of water it withdraws back to Lake Michigan. There will be no impact on lake levels. Use of groundwater in the area, however, is proven to have adverse impacts on wetlands, streams and lakes. It is not a reasonable alternative, as several independent analyses have shown."

### Myth

"Even if Waukesha would drop its lake water request, as recommended by the Coalition, it would be back with the same request in 10 years."

## REALITY

**IF WAUKESHA MANAGES ITS LOCAL WATER RESOURCES RESPONSIBLY, IT WON'T HAVE TO COME BACK IN 10 YEARS.** The NDS even takes into account Waukesha's full build out plans, or the point at which all developable land will be developed, to the year 2050. Waukesha can supply its residents with clean, healthy drinking water without drilling new wells or constructing an incredibly expensive pipeline to move water from one Basin to another and back again.



The Compact Implementation Coalition, collectively representing tens of thousands of Wisconsinites, has a long history of working on the Great Lakes Compact. From ensuring the adoption and implementation of a strong Great Lakes Compact to aiding the WDNR in the promulgation of administrative rules to implement the Compact, it has consistently advocated for the strongest protections available for the Great Lakes, in keeping with the spirit and the letter of the Compact.