

River Currents

Summer 2015

A quarterly publication of



**milwaukee
RIVERKEEPER®**

Waukesha's Great Lakes Water Boondoggle

On June 25, 2015, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) preliminarily approved the City of Waukesha's 2013 application to divert Great Lakes water. The WDNR's draft decision says Waukesha has no reasonable water supply alternative and can divert Great Lakes water to meet its current and future water needs.

Milwaukee Riverkeeper is leading a group of environmental organizations, called the Compact Implementation Coalition (CIC), in opposing the DNR's preliminary approval of the Waukesha application. Our reasons are listed below:

First, Waukesha has ignored Great Lakes Compact requirements by refusing to fully implement water conservation measures before requesting water from the Great Lakes. According to federal law, Waukesha's application should never have made it to this point because Waukesha has not fully implemented its water conservation plan. Waukesha is not a community in need.

Second, Waukesha has used an expanded water supply

service area to calculate its future water supply demand, which is illegal under the Great Lakes Compact. Waukesha is including projected industrial growth and residential development on land outside of its city limits in order to manufacture increased demand for water.

Waukesha also uses faulty forecasting to inflate its projected future water use. Waukesha claims they have no other choice than to use the expanded water supply service area due to a state law says water supply areas should mirror sanitary service areas. This state law is in direct conflict with the Great Lakes Compact, which was federally ratified, and therefore trumps the state law.



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Milwaukee Riverkeeper Sues Milwaukee County Over Issues Relating to Estabrook Dam Removal

In the last few months, the Village of Shorewood has joined the Milwaukee Common Council and the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District in passing resolutions to support the removal of the Estabrook Dam. Shorewood's vote came on the heels of a report released by Milwaukee County's own Office of Emergency Management, in which Director Christine Westrich cites increased flood risk created by the dam as a significant danger to the county and calls the decision to repair the Estabrook Dam "an unrestrained operational decision." **There is clear, countywide support for the removal of the dam—so why has the official policy of the county been changed from removal to repair?**

On January 29, 2015 the Committee on Finance, Personnel and Audit of Milwaukee County held a regular meeting during which they took up the issue of the Estabrook Dam without proper notice as required by the Wisconsin Open meetings law. During the meeting, Supervisor Theo Lipscomb inappropriately expanded the scope of a yearly

capital finance package with an amendment that only should have authorized reimbursement to the County for past costs incurred for maintenance of the dam. But instead, Lipscomb expanded the amendment and flipped the County's position on the Estabrook Dam from removal to repair. This is particularly troubling not only because the entire County Board had agreed to pursue removal only two months earlier, but also because there was no notice to the public.

This lack of public notice effectively prevented the public from attending and participating during the meeting. **As Ernst-Ulrich Fransen wrote in his June 28, 2015 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel editorial, "...this wasn't a simple change in a project's numbers; this was a significant policy change that could well end up costing taxpayers millions of dollars. The public deserved better."** In response, Milwaukee Riverkeeper filed a lawsuit against the Finance Committee for failure to give proper notice to the public that it was taking up this issue.

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Events

Visit <http://milwaukeekeeper.org/events> or call (414) 287-0207 for more events, updates and registration!

Waukesha Water Diversion Public Hearings (SWAN Events)

- August 17th & 18th - Times TBD - Save the Dates!
Help Milwaukee Riverkeeper tell the Wisconsin DNR to say no to Waukesha's request for Great Lakes water! It violates the Great Lakes Compact! A Compact Implementation Coalition debrief and free food will precede the Waukesha and Milwaukee hearings.

Let's Paddle! check our website for the latest information and updates

- July 30th - Milky Moonlight - Explore the Milwaukee River Harbor - 6:15pm to 9:30pm
Join Milwaukee Riverkeeper and the River Alliance of Wisconsin as we float down the Milwaukee River to Lake Michigan and back again, in the shadow of skyscrapers and under the light of the full moon.
- Guided Paddle Trips with Clearwater Outdoors - Dates and Times TBD
Join Milwaukee Riverkeeper on the water to learn more about Milwaukee River Basin!

Canoes for a Cause 2015

- August 15th - 9:30am - 2:00pm
It's our 4th Annual Milwaukee Canoes for a Cause with Leinenkugel Brewing! This year we are co-hosting with the Urban Ecology Center (UEC). Join us for a clean up at UEC's Rotary Centennial Arboretum with a cookout and refreshments to follow on-site!

Milwaukee Riverkeeper's Fall Event

- October 16 & 17th - Save the Date - More information to come soon!

Spring River Cleanup Success-Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our 20th Annual Spring River Cleanup! Over 3,500 volunteers spent the morning of April 18th hauling around 70,000 pounds of trash out of our rivers! That's equivalent to the combined weight of 3,333 mink, 1,000 river otter, 600 beaver and 333 salmon! Together, we are making our water cleaner, our riverbanks free of trash and debris, and our community aware of the beautiful rivers that surround us. **The 2015 Spring Cleanup would not have been possible without the support of our generous sponsors. Thank you!**

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Waukesha Water, continued from page 1



Photo courtesy of Great Lakes Commission

Third, a recent analysis, conducted by two, third party engineering companies, confirms that Waukesha has access to ample water supplies within the Mississippi River basin to meet current and future needs, without adversely impacting the environment or endangering public health. The Non-Diversion Solution is simple, healthy and cost-effective. It consists of using the current water system, using deep and shallow well water and adding reverse osmosis treatment to some of the deep aquifer wells to remove radium. Waukesha can do all of this without impacting local wetlands, surface waters, or causing additional drawdown to the deep aquifer. Over 40 other communities in Wisconsin use similar treatment methods to deal with radium levels and to deliver clean, safe water to their residents. The Great Lakes Compact only allows for an exception to the ban on water diversions for communities in counties that straddle the Great Lakes Basin, such as Waukesha, as a **last resort**, not for mere convenience or economic growth. The Non-Diversion Solution shows that Waukesha failed to include the best alternative option for water supply in the Mississippi River Basin in its application. Fully exploring this Non-Diversion Solution is an obligation Waukesha and the DNR have failed to meet.

Fourth, Waukesha's return flow to Lake Michigan would add pollution to an already impaired waterway and contribute to flood risk. The Root River is already impaired for phosphorus and adding pollutant load on top of what the waterbody already has will only impair it further. In large rain events, the Root River, a densely populated and small watershed, will receive additional volume of water that could exacerbate flooding.

Fifth, to finance Waukesha's Great Lakes diversion plan, Waukesha residents would see at least a 270% increase in their average annual water bill by 2024. Waukesha has an opportunity to provide healthy, sustainable water to their residents at almost half the cost of their Great Lakes diversion proposal with the Non-Diversion Solution, but is choosing

Welcome Abby-Our New Communications Specialist!

Abby Kuranz received her BS in Biology and Spanish from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Most of her professional experience comes from spending time in the Pacific Northwest and Southern California working on issues such as salmon population enhancement and residential solar. She completed an MS from University of Colorado-Boulder in Environmental Studies with a focus in western water policy and is back in the Midwest to apply her water knowledge to the Milwaukee River Basin and Great Lakes issues.



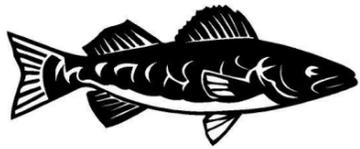
to pursue an extremely expensive route instead. The diversion would come at great financial cost to Waukesha's current residents as well as residents and businesses located within the expanded water supply area, who are mostly on viable well and septic systems. These new users will have to pay to hook-up to a new municipal sewer and water supply system. They will also need to add a new (pricey) bill to their monthly budget from the Waukesha Water Utility if they choose to connect.

With stakes this big and an application this riddled with inconsistencies, the DNR has no other option than to refuse Waukesha's application. The DNR's decision will set a precedent across the Great Lakes region for years to come. It is extremely important Wisconsin gets this decision right the first time around. Allowing Waukesha, with abundant water resources, to sidestep the Compact is a threat to our Great Lakes.

The public can comment on the DNR's preliminary approval until August 28, 2015 and we encourage our members to do so. Public hearings will be held **Monday, August 17, 2015** at 5:30 pm at Carroll College in Waukesha and **Tuesday, August 18, 2015** at 1:00 pm at the Zilber School of Public Health in Milwaukee and at 5:30 at the Racine Masonic Center. Please submit comments through our online submission form: www.protectourgreatlakes.org/comments.

After August 28, 2015, the DNR will respond to public comments and decide whether to refer the application to the region for review. Under the Compact, all eight Great Lakes governors must give unanimous consent before the project can be approved. Two Canadian premiers must also be consulted.

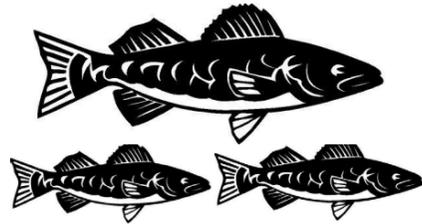
Stay updated on further developments and tell the DNR to deny Waukesha's Great Lakes diversion application here: www.protectourgreatlakes.org.



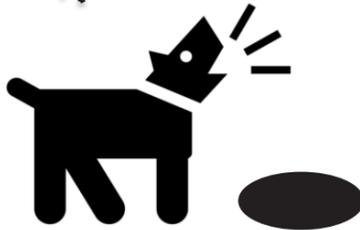
Help Walden the Walleye

Walden, just like you, likes a clean and safe home where he can raise his family.

Walden is thankful that Milwaukee Riverkeeper's dedicated volunteer water quality monitors help collect valuable information about the water quality of our rivers throughout the entire Milwaukee River Basin. We use water quality data to better understand the needs of our river ecosystems and Walden's home. **One set of the chemical compound to measure dissolved oxygen, which is essential to ensure healthy fish and aquatic life costs \$50.**



WATER QUALITY

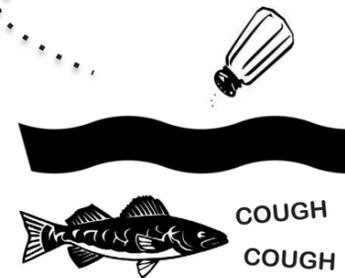
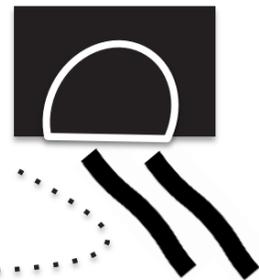


HUMAN SEWAGE

If Milwaukee Riverkeeper finds pollution, we bring in the "big dogs," aka: our friendly sewer sniffing dogs. They help us pinpoint the problem and then we work for a remedy to eliminate the pollution. **Hiring a Sewer Sniffing Dog (and handler) to sniff two manholes for human sewage costs \$100.**

Culverts, tree fall and other large objects in the river make it hard for Walden to swim upstream to his spawning grounds. Milwaukee Riverkeeper has identified 382 potential barriers to fish passage on the Menomonee River Watershed alone. **To remove one small impediment costs at least \$250.**

FISH BARRIERS



CHLORIDE

Cough, cough, chloride...Walden is not a saltwater fish, although in the winter he sometimes feels like he is swimming through an ocean. Milwaukee Riverkeeper works to measure and reduce the amount of salt in the Milwaukee River Basin through consistent monitoring and citizen education. **To monitor three sites for chloride toxicity and potential impairment costs \$350.**

Walden is tired of constantly having a headache from hitting his head against the Estabrook Dam. Help Walden eliminate his headaches by helping us remove the Estabrook Dam. **Milwaukee Riverkeeper's legal fund for this one initiative is over \$10,000.**



DAMS

Help Us Help Walden!

Did you know you have a lot in common with Walden the Walleye? Walden needs a healthy river to live just like you and I need a healthy watershed to survive. Walden lives in the Milwaukee River, but is having a pretty hard time because he encounters a lot of man-made problems while trying to complete his life cycle. We need your help in making sure Walden has a clean river to be happy and healthy!

Milwaukee Riverkeeper is working hard to help Walden survive, make it to his spawning grounds, successfully reproduce and continue the life cycle. You may not find yourself swimming up a river today, but those very same waters sustain all of us. If Walden is sick, we are not far from it.

Will you help us protect and restore the three rivers that make up the Great Milwaukee River Basin?

Those three rivers, the Milwaukee, the Menomonee and the Kinnickinnic, including the inner harbor and near shore Lake Michigan, make up more than 800 miles of rivers that we monitor, patrol and cleanup. That's a lot of water to keep track of, restore and protect. But we do it and we want to do more!

We could not continue this important work without your generous support. We thank you and Walden thanks you too, for your extraordinary compassion and commitment to creating swimmable and fishable rivers throughout the Milwaukee River Basin.

Please make a special contribution to help create swimmable, fishable rivers today!

Jennifer Bolger Breceda

Executive Director



SWIM Guide is Now Live!

Download the App today!



Want to know if your beach is safe for swimming today? There's an app for that! Explore the map to find a beach and see if it's open for swimming and recreation. The Swim Guide is an app for iPhone, iPad, iPod touch and Android that makes it easy to find, explore and enjoy your local beach.

The app was developed by the innovative people at Lake Ontario Waterkeeper and is now managed by Milwaukee Riverkeeper and other member groups of the Waterkeeper Alliance, a network of 250 water protection groups worldwide. Download the free app and find a clean beach wherever you go!

2014 Milwaukee River Basin Report Card Coming Soon!

By Brad Lukasz, Water Quality Intern

Milwaukee Riverkeeper is taking the final steps towards publishing the 2014 Milwaukee River Basin Report Card. The basin stretches across 6 counties and includes the Milwaukee, Menomonee and Kinnickinnic River Watersheds. While our volunteers collect the majority of water quality data in our basin, MMSD has again generously provided us with data from their service area. WDNR, which also monitors in our basin, has too.



The results are in and the unofficial grade for the Milwaukee River Basin in 2014 is a C-. Parameters such as dissolved oxygen and pH were excellent this past year. However, poor scores for phosphorus, bacteria, and turbidity, continue to be harmful to water quality in our basin. Milwaukee Riverkeeper will continue to strive to achieve our mission of swimmable, fishable, and drinkable waters throughout our basin. Milwaukee Riverkeeper thanks its volunteers for their excellent work!



RIVERKEEPER WATCH

From the log book of the Milwaukee Riverkeeper

Protecting Our Great Lakes From Nuclear Waste

Milwaukee Riverkeeper and our partner Waterkeepers in the Great Lakes are opposed to a new report from a Canadian Joint Review Panel that has called for the Canadian Minister of the Environment to approve a deep geological repository for nuclear waste in Kincardine, Ontario. This repository would threaten the drinking water supplies for 40 million people in the United States and Canada. The proposed plan from Ontario Power Generation (OPG) is to store underground radioactive nuclear waste less than one mile from the shores of Lake Huron. Great Lakes Waterkeepers are calling on the State Department to stand with citizens, local and state governments, and other stakeholders in the Great Lakes Basin whose voices have not yet been heard, but who are at risk if the deep geological repository fails. As of June, over 155 resolutions have been passed by local governments opposing this proposed facility, including the City of Milwaukee in May. Approval of this facility would set a devastating precedent for allowing other nuclear waste repositories to be located in the Great Lakes Basin.

Keeping Bakken Crude Oil Out of Our Rivers

Riverkeeper supported the City of Milwaukee in passing a resolution in May asking for more inspections of railroad tracks, crossings, and bridges on which Bakken crude oil is carried through Milwaukee. Riverkeeper is concerned about potential impacts to our waterways. These oil trains cross over our rivers at least 36 times, and potential spills of this heavy crude are very difficult to clean up, threaten our water quality and aquatic life, and pose a threat to decades of progress in

improving our rivers.

Removing Barriers to Fish Passage

Riverkeeper presented on Addressing Fish Passage Impediments in the Menomonee River at the Annual Conference of the Society of Freshwater Sciences in Milwaukee on May 19th. Riverkeeper is partnering with the Great Lakes Civilian Conservation Corps and Milwaukee County Parks to start removing small impediments to fish passage and trash from the Menomonee River Watershed this month. We are also designing several culvert retrofits and restoration projects, which we hope to implement soon if funding allows.

Improving Water Quality

We are working with the Mid Moraine Water Quality Collective, a group of municipalities and wastewater treatment plants in the upper Milwaukee Watershed, to start to identify projects where we can get the most bang for our buck in reducing sediment, phosphorus, and bacteria. We are also working as part of the KK River Watershed Advisory Committee, being coordinated by Sixteenth Street Community Health Center, to provide feedback and input to MMSD and others on how to incorporate green infrastructure and community benefits into planned flood management work throughout the watershed. We have also been working with a Fish and Wildlife Technical Team convened by WDNR to identify priority projects to improve fish and wildlife habitat and populations within the Milwaukee River Estuary Area of Concern.

Educating Students About Water

On May 8th, our Riverkeeper and Andy Yench from University of Wisconsin-Extension taught every 7th grader in Menomonee Falls about stormwater



Cheryl Nenn, Milwaukee Riverkeeper

pollution and how we can help to minimize polluted runoff getting into our local rivers. Thanks to Menomonee Falls for organizing!

Planning for Green Infrastructure

Riverkeeper is working with CH2M Hill, MMSD, Clean Wisconsin, American Rivers, and the Menomonee River Watershed Based Permit Group (made up of almost all the Menomonee municipalities) to identify several green infrastructure "retrofits" that could be incorporated into each municipality's future capital project reconstruction schedule! Next step is implementation!

Shaping a Model Water City

Riverkeeper has partnered with Milwaukee Water Commons for a series of town hall meetings in April and June to help envision the future of Milwaukee as a "model water city" and to tap into the creativity and local commitment of a diversity of stakeholders that are interested in helping shape our water future from artists to inner city youth to plumbers! The goal is to develop an action plan to promote a diversity of projects and initiatives that we can implement in future years to spark a broader conversation about water.

Spring River Cleanup

We helped procure around 525 trees for Menomonee Falls, Friends of Hart Park, and Ozaukee County to help improve riparian buffers and natural areas in our watersheds! Thanks to all volunteers and partners who planted them!

Meet Our Monitors



Steffan Morrison

Where do you monitor? Underwood Creek Gravel Shoals

How long have you been monitoring? 1 year.

Why do you monitor? For the pizza parties of course! Just kidding. I had a similar job doing this in college and enjoyed it very much. I'm passionate about water quality and this is my way to support that in my neighborhood. I would like to work on water quality technology in the future and this experience will be useful.

What is the craziest or most interesting thing you have seen when monitoring? I saw bright green dye in the creek one day (non-toxic), which was added by the city while testing to make sure their sewer system was working.



Estabrook Dam Removal, continued from page 1

There is a basic presumption that the public is entitled to information about government meetings, unless it will interfere with the government's need to conduct efficient business. There are a few things to consider when determining if the government can reasonably provide proper public notice, such as:

How burdensome is it to provide detailed notice to the public?

In the case of the Estabrook Dam, there was no burden to the County because one sentence on the agenda would have sufficed.

Is the subject matter of public interest?

The Estabrook Dam removal is definitely a matter of public interest. The residents of the City of Glendale (where Estabrook Dam is located) and many others throughout Milwaukee County have voiced their concern over the matter through various informal platforms (social media, letters to

the editor, a petition with a thousand signatures, etc.) and would have jumped at the chance to do so in a more formal setting. Our Riverkeeper would have commented along with many other organizations.

Is the agenda item routine and would the public be able to anticipate its inclusion in the meeting?

No one was expecting a policy change in a bonding package. While the county finance package was routine, the amendment to the finance package went too far. It was inappropriate for the finance committee to overhaul a county policy without public debate or discussion. Supervisor Patricia Jursik appropriately questioned Supervisor Lipscomb's amendment during the meeting because it went too far. The extent of the amendment should only have been an authorization to reimburse the County for money they spent on the dam last year (around \$80,000) as originally written. Instead, the Finance Committee pushed it as far as they

could, and flipped the policy with no public notice or public comment; this violates the law and is a disservice to the public.

The amendment was presented to the County Board in such a way that Board members believed that a vote against this single amendment would be a vote against all funding for all capital construction projects in the County for the year. The Estabrook Dam continues to be a public nuisance. The goal of our open meeting lawsuit is to ensure that if the County Board does decide to rightly change the policy on the dam that the issue is taken up in a fair and open manner with an opportunity for public involvement, as the law requires.

Finally, our main lawsuit continues pending DNR's process to issue an operational order for the Dam. This will require a public hearing and allow issues such as fish passage and flooding to be considered. Stay tuned for more info!

2015 Volunteer Monitoring Starts Off With A Bang!

By Joe Rath, Water Quality Specialist

The spring of 2015 started with a BANG for our volunteer stream monitoring program. Milwaukee Riverkeeper held three training sessions for volunteer stream monitors in April and May, adding over 20 beginning monitors to our crew and training 14 volunteers in advanced monitoring techniques using calibrated meters.

Some challenges for our monitoring program this year include a WDNR facilitated combination of two separate databases into one (in the past, data was managed separately for introductory and advanced volunteers), new datasheets combining several into one, and a push from WDNR to increase stream flow and macroinvertebrate monitoring across volunteer programs. Several volunteers have stepped up to answer the call and we appreciate it!

WDNR also trained monitoring coordinators to identify emerging

invasive species such as Asian clams and New Zealand mudsnails. We are particularly concerned about Asian clams, which were found in the lower Menomonee several years ago by USGS.

Milwaukee Riverkeeper also continues to coordinate widespread phosphorus testing across our entire River Basin (the Kinnickinnic, Menomonee and Milwaukee Rivers and their tributaries), with volunteers sampling over 60 locations.

New this year, Milwaukee Riverkeeper is managing the Milwaukee River Estuary Area of Concern (AOC) aesthetics monitoring program, with volunteers visually assessing 6 locations in the lower sections of the Menomonee, Kinnickinnic and Milwaukee Rivers, as well as three Lake Michigan beach sites. For more information or to volunteer for this program, please contact Matt Wolter at: matt@milwaukeekeeper.org.



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