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COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER • WAUKESHA COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION
LEAGUE • WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF LAKES • WISCONSIN LEAGUE OF
CONSERVATION VOTERS • WISCONSIN WILDLIFE FEDERATION •
WISCONSIN WETLANDS ASSOCIATION • WISCONSIN TROUT UNLIMITED**

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Conservation Groups Call for Stronger State Laws in Wisconsin to Improve Compact Agreement, Water Protections

Milwaukee, WI// Wisconsin-based conservation groups said today that the newly-signed and historic Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact contained important safeguards, but urged Wisconsin legislators to adopt stronger implementing legislation with regard to conservation, bottled water regulations, and diversion proposals, for the protection of Wisconsin waters and the Great Lakes.

“The Great Lakes are one of the natural wonders of the world and it is our responsibility to protect them,” said Melissa K. Scanlan, Executive Director of Midwest Environmental Advocates. “Now more than ever, we have a chance to guarantee the long-term protection of this vast, but vulnerable, public trust resource.”

Added Wisconsin Wildlife Federation's George Meyer, former Secretary of the DNR: “We applaud the Great Lakes Governors for their leadership in adopting uniform standards for protecting the Great Lakes for the benefit of future generations.”

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However, noting that the Great Lakes Compact allows each state to adopt additional statutory provisions to better implement and improve on the document, the conservation groups recommend that Wisconsin legislators and the Governor **enact contemporaneous legislation in FIVE KEY AREAS** in order to guarantee that the signed Compact is aligned with existing Wisconsin constitutional and statutory protections:

- 1) Bar loopholes to the diversion prohibition based on the size of the container or bottle being used to transport the water out of the Great Lakes Basin;
- 2) Require the return of diverted Great Lakes waters, following appropriate treatment, to the point of its initial withdrawal from a Great Lakes water body;
- 3) Require the implementation of water conservation measures for all withdrawals of water in amounts at or above 100,000 gallons per day;
- 4) Require the implementation of measurable water conservation programs, including water recycling and reuse, prior to any application for a diversion of Great Lakes water; and
- 5) Establish the political boundaries for “straddling communities” and communities within “straddling counties” seeking prospective diversions as of the date of the legislation’s enactment.

“By approving the Compact in coordination with these statutory recommendations, Wisconsin will be doing its part to protect and conserve one of the World’s greatest natural resources,” stated Derek Scheer, Water Policy Director of Clean Wisconsin.

“With global pressure increasing, we need to uphold the prohibitions on diversions from the Great Lakes and not allow the lakes to be exported one water bottle at a time,” according to Lynn Broaddus, Executive Director of Friends of Milwaukee’s Rivers.

Steven Schmuki, Waukesha attorney and President of the Waukesha County Environmental Action League (WEAL), stated: “As a resident of Waukesha, I believe our attention should be focused, not on the means by which Waukesha can tap Great Lakes water but, rather, on how we can better manage the resources we already have.” Schmuki added, “Just as Waukesha County has practiced living within its financial means, we must also live within our water means. This doesn’t mean no growth. It simply means wiser use of our resources to ensure a better future for our neighbors, our children and ourselves.”

The groups agreed that the signing of the Great Lakes Compact was an important step to manage the Great Lakes and resolved to work with Wisconsin’s Legislature and Governor to adopt strong state laws implementing the Compact.

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Fast Facts About the Great Lakes Compact

- The Compact is the result of four years of work by the Great Lakes Governors and interest groups representing industry, agriculture and the environment.
- The Compact is a compromise document that sets a regulatory floor and allows each state to adopt more protective requirements.
- Unlike the existing Water Resources Development Act, the Compact establishes standards to govern the Great Lakes Governors' approval or veto over any diversions of water from the Great Lakes Basin.
- For the first time, the Compact establishes a uniform standard to apply to in-basin uses of water, but allows each jurisdiction to set the withdrawal level at which this standard will apply.