

**Contact:**

For poll details: Denny Caneff, River Alliance of Wisconsin (608/257-2424 x115)  
For legislative updates on the Compact: Anne Sayers, WI League of Conservation Voters (608/661-0845)  
For policy questions regarding the Great Lakes Compact: Peter McAvoy, 16<sup>th</sup> St. Community Health Center  
(414/672-1315 x 154)

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## **New Poll Shows Citizens Want Strong Great Lakes Protections Great Lakes Compact Legislation Expected This Week**

Madison -- With a new poll showing strong public support for protecting the Great Lakes, two legislators are poised to introduce legislation this week that puts the Great Lakes Compact on the winter agenda of the state Senate.

The poll, conducted by the UW Survey Center between October and December and commissioned by several Wisconsin conservation organizations, shows that Wisconsinites strongly support passage of the Great Lakes Compact.

Support by Wisconsin residents transcends partisan interest and geography: poll results show that support for the Compact is as strong in regions of the state far away from the Great Lakes as it is in communities adjacent to the lakes.

The Great Lakes Compact is an agreement, signed two years ago by the governors of the eight Great Lakes states, that would prevent diversion of Great Lakes water by industries and municipalities, with some limited exceptions. All eight legislatures of the Great Lakes states must approve the Compact, and Congress must ratify it before it takes effect.

Poll respondents (409 randomly chosen people) were given a brief explanation of what the Compact would do and how it would work. After hearing the explanation, 80% percent of those polled indicated they wanted Wisconsin to make the Great Lakes Compact law; about 10% were opposed.

Partisan persuasion seems to make no difference when it comes to supporting the Compact. People identifying themselves as Republican, Democrat or Independent support the Compact roughly equally (83%, 76%, and 82%, respectively).

“This shows that keeping Great Lakes water in the Great Lakes is a non-partisan issue, a fact reflected in the very encouraging bipartisan sponsorship of a strong Compact bill,” says Anne Sayers of the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters.

Sen. Rob Cowles (R-Green Bay) and Sen. John Lehman (D-Racine) have led efforts to draft and introduce a Strong Great Lakes Compact.

The poll also shows that you don't need to live near Lake Superior or Lake Michigan to care about protecting them. About 83% of poll respondents from non-Great Lakes shore

communities support passage of the Great Lakes Compact, compared to 77% of respondents living in Great Lakes shore communities.

“This isn’t a surprising finding. Everyone in Wisconsin has some deep connection with the Great Lakes, no matter where they live. People everywhere appreciate their beauty, and they also seem to understand their fragility,” says Denny Caneff of the River Alliance of Wisconsin.

Other findings in the poll suggest that Wisconsin residents favor several specific actions to protect the Great Lakes, some of which may end up in the Compact legislation introduced this week.

- 86% of those polled said it was important (“very” or “somewhat”) that Great Lakes water should not be bought and sold without more oversight and regulation
- 86% of those polled said it was important to prevent local communities from changing their boundaries so they could qualify to take water from the Great Lakes
- 94% of those surveyed said it was important to require local communities to put in place water conservation programs before they could increase their use of Great Lakes water

A large majority of those polled said they favored programs in their communities to help them conserve water, and said they think dropping water levels in Wisconsin’s lakes, streams and groundwater is a serious problem.