

Basic Facts

The goal of the Great Water Alliance is to bring safe and sustainable water to Waukesha. Here are the basic facts about this historic program:

WHO

The Waukesha Water Utility (WWU) is leading the charge to implement a new water supply program by coordinating activities with governmental agencies including the Great Lakes Common Council, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Additionally, the Great Water Alliance is working with local municipalities, residents along the route and other interested parties.

WHAT

New pipelines will carry freshwater sourced from Lake Michigan to the city of Waukesha, and then return the same amount—in the form of clean, treated water—using the Root River tributary. There will be a total of 36 miles of pipe placed underground, but only 25% will be in urban/residential areas. The majority of the pipeline will go through industrial and rural areas.

WHEN

The Great Water Alliance was effectively born on June 21, 2016, with the unanimous approval of the City of Waukesha's request to source water from Lake Michigan by the eight governors who make up the Great Lakes Compact Council. Planning and design are ongoing, with construction scheduled to begin in 2020 and completion slated for 2023.

WHERE

Plans call for the water supply pipeline to begin at a new pumping station in southwest Milwaukee and travel through West Allis and New Berlin to Waukesha. A second pipeline will deliver treated water from the Clean Water Plant in Waukesha through New Berlin and Muskego to an outfall point in Franklin that empties into the Root River. To service the return flow, a new booster pumping station will also be built in Waukesha.

WHY

The City of Waukesha needs a long-term, sustainable alternative to its existing water supply. The aquifer which has been the city's primary source of drinking water has become depleted in Southeast Wisconsin. This is due in large part to a natural layer of shale rock that restricts rainwater and snowmelt from recharging the aquifer and has resulted in elevated levels of radium and other contaminants.