

Waukesha

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# Water Supply Alternatives



## The best water supply option for Waukesha is the Great Lakes

For years, the Waukesha Common Council and the Waukesha Water Utility have searched for a new long-term water supply that would be affordable and sustainable, while protecting the public health of the citizens of Waukesha. After extensive research and careful consideration of the alternatives, we have determined that a Great Lakes water supply is the only reasonable alternative that meets these important criteria for a long-term water supply.

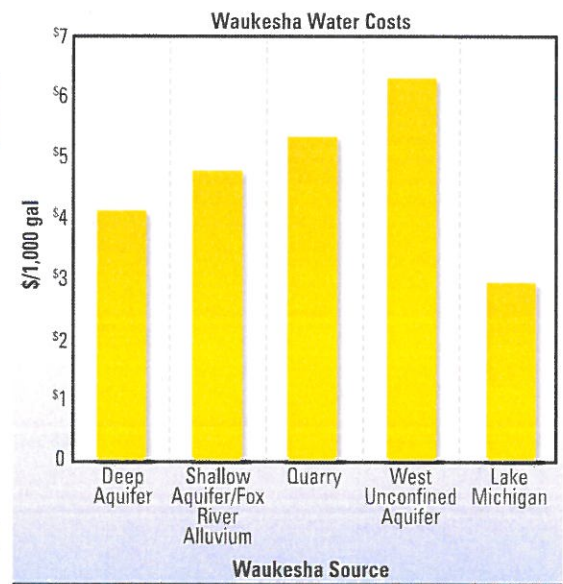
With our current deep aquifer water supply, a layer of rock limits the natural recharge. It is difficult for water to seep through the earth and replenish the aquifer. The aquifer has already dropped 500 to 600 feet. Continuing to use this declining resource will be more and more expensive because of increasing levels of contamination and the increasing cost to pump from deeper underground. The impacts on both groundwater and surface waters (like streams and wetlands) mean that continued use of the deep aquifer may be restricted by state agencies or by the courts. In addition, bills have also been introduced in the state Legislature that would result in limits on the use of deep groundwater.

Another alternative – the use of shallow groundwater – would require numerous new wells and would have major environmental impacts, according to modeling by experts. Shallow wells and quarries are more susceptible to contamination, making them less reliable, less protective of public health, and more expensive to treat to safe drinking water standards. All new shallow wells and quarries options are located outside of the city's borders and would likely lead to jurisdictional disputes with other governments or individuals. The negative environmental impacts of this alternative would also likely lead to lawsuits or regulatory restrictions on the use of shallow groundwater.

### Extensive evaluation reveals Lake Michigan is the only reasonable water supply alternative

Water Supply Alternative	Environmental Impact	Long-Term Sustainability	Public Health	Implementability
Deep and shallow aquifers	●	●	○	●
Shallow aquifer and Fox River alluvium	●	●	○	●
Lake Michigan, deep and shallow aquifers	●	○	⊙	●
<b>Lake Michigan</b>	○	○	⊙	●
Deep, shallow aquifers, Fox River, quarries	●	●	●	●

○ No negative impact      ● Moderate negative impact  
 ⊙ Minor negative impact    ● Significant negative impact



## **Waukesha's water alternatives have been studied extensively**

Understanding the importance of their mission, the Common Council and the water utility thoroughly examined all the alternatives before deciding that Lake Michigan was the best source of reliable drinking water. At least six different independent engineering firms have analyzed the issue for the water utility. The Utility Commission and the Common Council held 53 open, public meetings where the water supply application or related topics were discussed, including four open houses where the public could have a direct dialogue with the experts. Extensive public input was received and has helped strengthen the final proposal.

The resulting water plan includes approximately 2,000 pages of analysis and a thorough examination of the alternatives. Waukesha's water supply has also been studied by the state's regional planning authority. A comprehensive regional water supply plan was drafted by 32 experts who met 21 times over five years to discuss area water supply issues. This group of planners, scientists and engineers and the regional planning authority have also recommended that the best long-term solution for Waukesha is to switch to Lake Michigan water.

Based on this extensive analysis, the Common Council overwhelmingly supported the application in two separate votes, with only a single negative vote on both occasions. The City's scientific data and its conclusion that Great Lakes water is the best source for our future are also being independently reviewed by the Department of Natural Resources. As a part of its process, the DNR will seek even more input by holding additional public meetings.

## **Waukesha must provide a new water supply for our future**

There is no issue that is more important to our families and the employers in our community than ensuring an affordable water supply that is reliable and sustainable for the long term.

The City must bring its water supply into full compliance with federal radium standards by 2018 or face fines of up to \$10,000 per day for each non-compliant well. Science has shown us that the quantity of available groundwater is declining drastically, so it does not make sense to invest millions of dollars in additional treatment at groundwater wells. To secure our future, it is clear that we must find a new water supply today that will solve both our short-term radium and long-term water supply needs in a cost-effective and sustainable manner.

We will do all we can to provide reasonable rates for the families and businesses in Waukesha. However, it is important to remember that a safe and reliable water supply is essential to all life and future opportunities in the city. A person can only survive three days without water, but we will provide this basic necessity for the average customer for less than \$50 per month or \$1.65 per day.

## **Waukesha's sovereignty is not at risk**

Waukesha will negotiate with Milwaukee, Oak Creek, and Racine as potential suppliers of Great Lakes water. Negotiations have not yet begun. Our priority in these negotiations will be to strike an agreement that provides us reliable, high-quality water at a reasonable cost. Any agreement that is proposed will be considered in a public process and must be approved by the Common Council.

15 municipalities currently get their water from Milwaukee and seven others get water from Racine and Oak Creek. None of them have sacrificed their sovereignty.

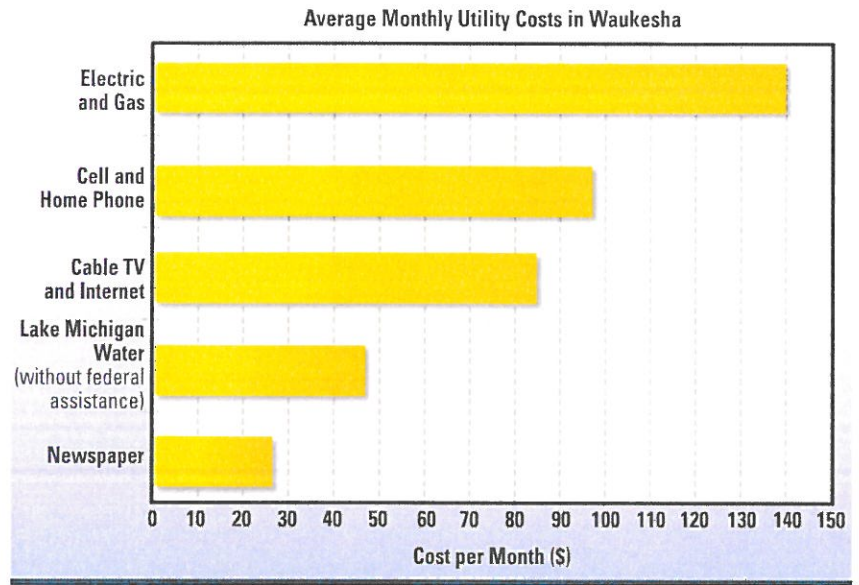
A water supplier cannot threaten to cut off or restrict water once an initial agreement is reached. Increases in water rates must be approved by the state Public Service Commission (PSC) and must be based on the costs of providing the water. Milwaukee's request for substantial rate increases for the first time in a number of years are included in Waukesha's estimates of the costs of Lake Michigan water. However, the PSC is significantly reducing Milwaukee's requested rates.

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## Waukesha will meet the needs of its citizens

Our search for a new water supply has been a complex issue, involving many financial, environmental and legal factors. Our process has been thorough, with many opportunities for public participation and input. In the end, we are confident in the strength of our analysis and in our conclusion that Great Lakes water is the only reliable option for the long-term health of Waukesha. We are also committed to ensuring the future well-being of our city with safe, reliable, and affordable water. If you have questions about this or any other city issue, please contact your representative on the Common Council. Additional information on the water supply issues is also available at the Waukesha Water Utility Web site.



A link to the Water Utility's Web site can be found on the front page of the City's Web site at [www.ci.waukesha.wi.us](http://www.ci.waukesha.wi.us).

### Contact Us



Waukesha Water Utility

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