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**Statewide Coalition Weighs in on New Berlin's
Request for Great Lakes Water
Conservation Groups Call for Implementation of Great Lakes
Compact before Application is Considered**

Milwaukee, WI// Wisconsin and regional conservation groups registered their comments with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) over the application submitted by the City of New Berlin requesting a diversion of Great Lakes water. Collectively noting that New Berlin's application is deficient in a number of critical respects regarding criteria applicable to "straddling communities", the coalition is calling for DNR to delay consideration of the application until the Wisconsin State Legislature has been given time to consider the Great Lakes Compact.

"The Great Lakes are one of the natural wonders of the world. It is our responsibility to protect them, and passing the Great Lakes Compact is the first step," said Melissa Malott, Water Program Director for Clean Wisconsin. "Senator Kedzie's legislative council committee is working hard to draft state implementing law, and we look forward to the Compact being introduced to the legislature early next year. However, it is absolutely premature for the DNR to consider New Berlin's application before the legislature approves the Compact."

Jodi Habush-Sinykin, attorney at Midwest Environmental Advocates stated: "An issue as important as this – which will affect hundreds of thousands of people far into the future – deserves a careful, deliberate process. Accordingly, the process for considering any Great Lakes basin diversion application must be open and transparent to the public."

(MORE)

In addition to calling for a public hearing to be held on New Berlin's application, the coalition registered several other comments with the DNR, including:

1. New Berlin omission of any analysis regarding viable water supply alternatives to meet future community water needs.
2. Calling attention to the fact that the states of Illinois, New York, Ohio and the Province of Ontario have all raised significant questions and issues with the New Berlin application.
3. If DNR moves ahead with consideration of New Berlin's application, other states & provinces can rightfully invoke their veto power under the federal Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) that currently covers Great Lakes diversions.
4. Consideration of New Berlin's application prior to passage of the Compact will undermine the extensive process undertaken by the Great Lakes states and provinces to come to agreement on this issue.

The coalition called for DNR to wait until the Compact is passed to address deficiencies in New Berlin's application, rather than prematurely moving on the diversion. Any decision by the DNR before Wisconsin passes the Compact will put Wisconsin at odds with other Great Lakes states.

"We all have a responsibility to protect the Great Lakes, not for a single interest, but for our families, wildlife, and future generations," Malott noted. "Senator Kedzie's legislative council committee is working to implement a strong Compact for Wisconsin. The DNR should all respect the legislative process and wait until the Compact is passed to consider New Berlin's request."

The coalition plans to continue to work with Wisconsin's Legislature 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.
- The Compact mandates collaborative scientific monitoring of the Great Lakes, regulates water diversions from the Great Lakes, and incorporates the public into the management of the Great Lakes.
- Unlike the existing Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), the Compact establishes standards to govern the Great Lakes Governors' decisions over any diversions of water from the Great Lakes Basin. Under WRDA, any state can veto a Wisconsin community's request for water; under the Compact, there is a standards-based decision making process, which will put an end to baseless vetoes.