

Dept. of Natural Resources: Approves straddling community diversion application from city of Racine

Posted on Wednesday, Apr 25, 2018

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MADISON, Wis. – The Department of Natural Resources issued an approval today allowing the city of Racine to divert an annual average of 7 million gallons a day of water from Lake Michigan for its customers within the village of Mount Pleasant. The village of Mount Pleasant straddles the divide between the Lake Michigan basin and Mississippi River basin.

For perspective, the total surface water withdrawn from Lake Michigan from all states in 2016 was reported as 9.6 billion gallons per day by the Great Lakes Commission. Racine's requested 7 million gallons per day withdrawal would only amount to a 0.07 percent increase in the total surface water withdrawals from Lake Michigan. This withdrawal would still put the Racine water utility under its existing withdrawal capacity and below its 1995 average day water sales number as cited in its application.

Straddling community diversion applications are regulated under the Great Lakes Compact, which took effect in 2008. The process allows communities that straddle the Great Lakes basin divide to apply to divert Great Lakes water.

The village of Mount Pleasant lies predominantly in the Great Lakes basin, and the

Racine Water Utility already serves over 5,000 residential customers in the village of Mount Pleasant. The diversion approval allows the Racine Water Utility to extend public water service to the 8 percent of the village that is in the Mississippi River basin, partially including the Foxconn facility site. Because Racine's public water system will continue to serve a group of largely residential customers, including the straddling community of Mount Pleasant, the DNR determined that Racine's proposed diversion is for "public water supply purposes."

As part of the diversion approval, the city of Racine must ensure that the diverted water is returned to Lake Michigan minus consumptive use such as evaporation. The water returned to Lake Michigan will be treated at the Racine Wastewater Treatment Plant to meet all applicable state and federal water quality discharge standards. Any industrial customers, such as Foxconn, will work with the City of Racine to meet pretreatment requirements for wastewater.

Again, for perspective, Lake Michigan rose 56.3 inches between January 2013 and August 2017. ([NOAA GLERL Dashboard](#) - exit DNR). By comparison, the annual consumptive use water loss caused by the diversion from Lake Michigan would be about .0025 inches or about the thickness of a lightweight (12 bond) sheet of paper.

After receiving the application in January, the DNR invited the public to provide comments on the application, and received public testimony at a hearing in early March in Sturtevant. The department has taken the comments under consideration in issuing the approval and drafted a comment and response document available by searching the DNR website, [dnr.wi.gov](#) for keywords "[Racine diversion](#)."

"We received approximately 800 comments on the Racine application, which shows the public's strong interest in this topic," said Adam Freihoefer, water use section chief for the Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater. "We appreciate the public's involvement and I thank those who took the time to comment."

More information about the Great Lakes Compact is also available by searching [dnr.wi.gov](#) for "[Great Lakes Compact](#)."