

Wisconsin Compact Implementation Coalition: Racine Diversion Request Raises Serious Questions; Compact Coalition Urges Regional Review

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CONTACT: Marilyn Goris Weisman, 414-736-6217, magoris2001@gmail.com
Racine Diversion Request Raises Serious Questions; Compact Coalition Urges Regional Review

MADISON & MILWAUKEE — The Wisconsin Compact Implementation Coalition (CIC) is urging the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Water Resources Regional Body to initiate a formal review of the City of Racine's proposal to divert Great Lakes water. Racine's application raises serious questions about its compliance with the Great Lakes Compact.

Although the city of Racine is located entirely within the Lake Michigan Basin, it is seeking an approval for a diversion of up to 7 million gallons per day of Great Lakes water to supply an area of the neighboring Village of Mount Pleasant that lies outside the Great Lakes Basin. The purpose of the diversion is to provide Great Lakes water to Foxconn Technology Group ("Foxconn"), a private, large multinational electronics manufacturer, for its first U.S. manufacturing plant.

Racine's application triggers a series of serious questions that strike at the heart of the Compact's prohibition on diversions, including:

- Who is the appropriate applicant for a straddling community diversion?
- How can a diversion of Great Lakes water to a private industrial complex meet the Compact's "Public Water Supply Purposes" criteria?
- What kind of information does an applicant need to disclose relating to potential adverse impacts to Great Lakes water resources?

Over 800 stakeholders, including individuals and organizations from Canada, Wisconsin and the other Great Lake states, as well as the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Illinois Attorney General, submitted comments to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, raising significant concerns or questions about the application's failure to satisfy key provisions of the Compact and lack of information about potentially harmful environmental impacts of the diversion.

"How these questions and concerns are resolved will surely set the course for future diversions across the Great Lakes Basin and we want to be sure a precedent is set that complies with the spirit and intent of the Compact," said Jimmy Parra, a lawyer with Midwest Environmental Advocates and a member of the CIC. "If central provisions of the Compact are ignored by Wisconsin, or interpreted in a way that violates the goals of the Compact, the Regional Body should be alarmed," said Jennifer Bolger Brededa, the Executive Director of Milwaukee Riverkeeper and current lead of the CIC. "This is too important to rush, and under the Compact, the Regional Body has the authority to request a review of the Racine application," Bolger Brededa explained.

"If the Regional Body fails to act, the Great Lakes region will miss a critical opportunity to review a precedent-setting diversion proposal of undeniable regional significance," said Ezra Meyer, Water Resources Specialist at Clean Wisconsin and member of the CIC.

The Coalition urges the Regional Body to act now to protect the Great Lakes, now and for future generations.