



PRESS RELEASE
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Chicago Hearing Testimony 9/8/04 Delivered by Derek Scheer, Water Policy Director at Clean Wisconsin

My name is Derek Scheer, Water Policy Director at Clean Wisconsin. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Clean Wisconsin's 7,000 members that care about the health of the Great Lakes and protecting Wisconsin's Clean Water. Many here today will be speaking on other aspects of the Compact but I would like to briefly touch on the Compacts Treatment of Tributary Groundwater.

We have Groundwater issues in Wisconsin both in and out of the Basin. Groundwater withdrawals lower lake and stream levels, warm headwaters and lower the quality of tributary inputs to the Great Lakes. The Annex dictates that the standard should allow no significant adverse impact of cumulative impacts to the quantity or quality of the Waters of the Basin. This Standard should assure that these threats to the waters of the Great Lakes are minimized. To do this, it is important to take on the yeoman's task of information gathering so that we are not flying blind. The compact should also look at all withdrawals over 10,000 gallons per day (gpd), the current 100,000 gpd standard is too high to capture all the necessary information. In some areas large withdrawals will do no harm but other areas, more sensitive habitats could be harmed. Knowledge will be the best weapon in prohibiting this harm. Just as small withdrawals from a sensitive source will cause problems, the effect of many small or large withdrawals is a situation of too many straws and not enough drink. Again the key to protection is information gathering.

The standard should also be sustainable and allow adaptive management. Because we do not have an accurate picture of what we are protecting, withdrawal permits especially those for ground water should be for a limited time period to allow review and protection. By only looking at new or increased withdrawals we are limiting the regions ability to fully protect the Basin waters and water dependant natural resources.

Having said that, I would like to praise the council for recognizing the connections between groundwater and surface water. In Wisconsin, we have Rivers like the Root, Bois Brule and Wolf the flow to the lakes; the health of their head waters effect the lakes and this step beyond the Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) is greatly appreciated. Finally I would like to praise the enforcement section and one important strength of this standard is inclusion of attorney's fees provisions. These guarantee enforcement and protect it from budgetary or political concerns. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak. I look forward to the Wisconsin hearings.

Clean Wisconsin, an environmental advocacy organization founded as Wisconsin's Environmental Decade, protects Wisconsin's clean water and air and advocates for clean energy by being an effective voice in the state legislature and by holding elected officials and corporations accountable. Phone: 608.251.7020, Fax: 608.251.1655, Email: info@cleanwisconsin.org, Website: www.cleanwisconsin.org.