



PRESS RELEASE
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Contact: Derek Scheer, dscheer@cleanwisconsin.org
Cell Ph: 608.345.8546 (Use cell since DS will be out of office until 9.21)
Office Ph: 608.251.7020

Clean Wisconsin Offers Tips on How to Participate in Public Hearings

Five Open House & Public Comment Sessions on Great Lakes Water Use to be Held in Wisconsin This September - October

MADISON, Wis. (September 16, 2004)— This fall, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is hosting five open house and public comment sessions on behalf of the Council of Great Lakes Governors to gather input from Wisconsin citizens for use in the development of its final draft agreement, often known as the Annex 2001, updating the protection and management of the Great Lakes.

Clean Wisconsin, an environmental advocacy organization, has taken the environmental lead on this issue in Wisconsin and recently participated in a regional comment session held in Chicago on September 8th to express its concern regarding this highly sought after resource unprotected by a regional policy preventing exports or overuse and abuse within the Great Lakes' ecosystem. (For specific comments, refer to Derek Scheer's Chicago Hearing Testimony.) Knowing how vitally important water issues are to Wisconsin's economy and way of life, Clean Wisconsin has embarked on an effort to inform and inspire Wisconsinites to get involved by providing tips on how to participate in public hearings, offering alternative ways to voice concern, highlighting key draft provisions, and promoting the dates and locations of the upcoming public sessions.

Details about the threats to the Great Lakes, a link to the draft proposal issued from the Council, a customizable statement of support letter to Governor Doyle, David Naftzger and the Council of Great Lakes Governors, and timely issue updates are available at www.cleanwisconsin.org or call 608.251.7020 for additional information.

TIPS FOR PARTICIPATING IN PUBLIC HEARINGS

- **Your Voice Does Matter**— Public hearings provide a valuable forum for citizens to voice their opinions and concerns. The upcoming Wisconsin session proceedings will be passed along to the Great Lakes Council and Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle in unedited transcript form for review and consideration.
- **Register Early** — The format for public hearings or comment sessions can vary but many begin with informal networking sessions. While mingling with politicians, lobbyists and special interest group representatives can

be intimidating it can also provide an opportunity to get acclimated. Use the time to register right away and get on the docket to avoid waiting until the end of the evening to share your comments.

- **Sign-in Cards Double as Comment Cards** — Registration typically includes a sign-in card requesting your name, affiliation, three short lines for questions and three short lines for any comments. These cards sometimes double as comment cards for those reluctant or unable to speak due to time limitations.
- **Know the Facts** — The more educated you are about an issue, the fewer surprises. Come prepared with comments so you can speak concisely and with authority to gain much-desired credibility with an audience representing both sides of the issue.
- **Be Concise** — Depending on participation turnout, public comment time limitations can range anywhere from two to five minutes. Passion for an issue and a unique point of view are memorable attention-getters. Relate a personal anecdote or come armed with some statistics to help illustrate your concern but remember to limit comments to one or two key points to make the most impact.
- **Avoid Long-Winded Soliloquies** — Like an Oscar-winner thanking everyone and his brother, long-winded participants are given the time's up gesture to keep proceedings moving along.
- **Agree to Disagree** — Arguments for both sides of an issue can get heated. Respectfully agree to disagree when practical so that consensus can be reached eventually with an outcome that suits everyone.
- **Stay Involved** — Unable to participate? Session ran out of time? Consider a variety of alternative ways to voice your concern and/or enhance your public hearing experience. Send decision-makers a letter or postcard stating your position, call decision-makers, participate in online petitions or group letters, recruit friends to join the effort, vote for like-minded legislators, and assist with fundraising efforts to fund public service announcements, ads, websites, newsletters and lobbying efforts.

KEY GREAT LAKES PROVISIONS

- The Council of Great Lakes Governors and Canadian Premiers will move toward regional management of the Great Lakes to address a variety of threats that have made the Great Lakes vulnerable such as increased withdrawals for drinking water, inadequate water conservation and reuse applications, lowering lake levels and increased concentrations of pollution.
- Clean Wisconsin is working closely with the Council to help ensure objectivity to produce “an enhanced water management system that is simple, durable, efficient, retains and respects authority within the basin, and most

importantly protects, conserves, restores and improves the waters and water-dependent natural resources of the Great Lakes Basin”. ^[1]

- Per capita water consumption in the United States is more than four times higher than the global average. Water waste, along with contamination of available supplies, now jeopardizes important public resources. The quality and supply of the Great Lakes system of interrelated aquifers, streams and lakes can make a huge impact on the surrounding lakes and habitats that define Wisconsin’s way of life.
- Surging demand and unlimited access threaten the Great Lakes region. Global water market solutions proposing exporting Great Lakes water, along with previously unthinkable groundwater shortages in many Great Lakes communities, are now showing the region’s citizens and leaders how precious and vulnerable their water is. Protections from export plans and unrestrained water use, however, are weak or nonexistent in the Great Lakes.

IMPORTANT DATES & LOCATIONS

- **Tuesday, September 28** – Milwaukee, Wisconsin State Fair Park Youth Center, 84th Street just south of I-94. Enter Gate 5--the Center and parking lot are on the left.
- **Thursday, September 30** – Ashwaubenon, Ashwaubenon Village Hall Council Chamber, 2155 Holmgren Way. Visitors should enter using the Public Safety entrance.
- **Monday, October 4** – Stevens Point, UW-Stevens Point College of Natural Resources lobby and auditorium, 800 Reserve St.
- **Tuesday, October 5** – Duluth, Holiday Hotel & Suites, Lake Michigan Room, 200 W. 1st St.
- **Wednesday, October 6** – Ashland, Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, U.S. Highway 2 and County Highway G, west of Ashland.

The future prosperity of Great Lakes communities depends on managing the region’s water – locally and basin-wide – not frivolously as an endless sea but realistically as a finite and fragile global resource.

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.

^[1] The Great Lakes Charter Annex: A Supplementary Agreement to the Great Lakes Charter.