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Northwest Water Planning Alliance heeds World Water Day call through collaborative efforts to protect the groundwater and Fox River for future generations

Cooperative effort between municipalities and counties yielding tangible results for residents and businesses

On March 22 members of the Northwest Water Planning Alliance celebrated World Water Day and the International Year of Water Cooperation, a United Nations designation, by reflecting on two years of significant progress in its combined efforts to protect shared groundwater and Fox River resources. Representing five councils of government, approximately 80 communities (including Aurora and Elgin), five counties (DeKalb, Kane, Kendall, Lake and McHenry), and 1.3 million people, the Northwest Water Planning Alliance's mission is to improve research, policies and outreach on water supply protection in the region.

"Northeastern Illinois' regional water supply plan, *Water 2050*, made it clear that collaborative efforts between communities sharing the same finite water sources were going to be absolutely imperative if we want to ensure economic growth, ecological integrity, and a high quality of life," said Aurora Mayor and NWPA Chairman Thomas Weisner. "Today, on World Water Day, I cannot commend our members enough for all of our success to date. But we can't forget there's a lot left to do."

In the fall of 2011, NWPA partnered with the Illinois State Water Survey (ISWS) to measure current groundwater levels, which improve management of shared groundwater resources. Batavia, Aurora, Elgin, and DeKalb, as well as Kane and McHenry counties, were among the most active participants.

NWPA worked closely with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) to develop bill inserts and newsletter ads to educate residents and business about water issues in the area. The NWPA also joined the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency WaterSense campaign to promote water efficient technologies.

NWPA's biggest initiative thus far has been to create a shared conversation ordinance for sprinkler systems usage. With the help of the Metropolitan Planning Council, NWPA passed a flexible, conservation-driven ordinance for each community to adopt. NWPA is also working with the Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant to create a tailored version of the popular Lawn to Lake manual for outdoor water use education.

Moving forward, NWPA is working with the ISWS to better track water management data and kicking off work with CMAP on strategic planning and [drought management](#) preparedness.

“Today is a great moment to reflect on all we’ve accomplished, and to strengthen our resolve for all the work ahead,” said Wesiner. “World Water Day and the International Year of Water Cooperation are great reminders of our need, here in our own backyard, to come together in protecting and preserving our groundwater and Fox River water through joint research, policy and practice.”

For more information, go to www.nwpa.us.