

Kane Takes On Water Challenge

First In Illinois to Address Issue - Read How



"Kane County was the first in Illinois to address the challenge of future water supply and we have been consistently ahead of the curve," said Kane County Board Chairman Karen McConnaughay following a [Nov. 29, 2011 presentation](#) by Mary Ann Dickinson, president of the Chicago-based [Alliance for Water Efficiency](#), who said 40 of the 50 states will have some degree of water shortage by 2013.

In January, 2010, the Regional Water Supply Planning Group (RWSPG), representing 11 counties in Northeastern Illinois, voted unanimously to approve a [landmark plan](#) intended to ensure the availability of clean water for household and commercial use in decades to come. The plan was commissioned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to address rapid population growth that, without improved conservation and resource management, could lead to shortages in coming years.

"This is a highly specific plan directed at state, regional, county, municipal, and other public agencies responsible for ensuring adequate supplies of clean water," said RWSPG chair Bonnie Thomson Carter, a Lake County Board member and president of the Lake County Forest Preserves. "Based on the data, it is clear that continued rapid population growth and economic activity will put a strain on the region's current supply, and significant shortages could result without coordinated action to implement this new water plan."

The RWSPG began meeting monthly in January 2007, with 35 representatives from counties, municipalities, and other stakeholder categories such as water suppliers, agriculture, industry, power, wastewater treatment, conservation, environment, academia, and real estate. Coordinated by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), the plan was developed with funding from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).

With adoption of the regional report, Chairman McConnaughay, a member and former chairman of the RWSPG, began working to build what Schuch describes as "an understanding of what Kane County's role should be in moving forward with the water supply program in Kane County and in the Northeastern Illinois Region."

What emerged in mid-2010 was a voluntary intergovernmental agreement reached between the five Councils of Government in Kane, McHenry, Lake, Kendall and DeKalb Counties and the

counties themselves to begin uniform water use and leakage reporting from their municipalities; water conservation education and model ordinances; preparing for drought; and other measures that would eventually lead to comprehensive planning for sustainable future water supplies in what is now called that Five-County Northwest Water Planning Area. The planning area is a sub-region of the state-designated eleven-county Northeastern Illinois Water Planning Area.

The new planning area and its representatives are working with the recommendations of the [Water 2050 Northeastern Illinois Regional Water Supply/Demand Plan](#) adopted by the Northeastern Illinois Regional Water Supply Planning Group on Jan. 26, 2010. According to Schuch, the Water 2050 Plan incorporates many of the policies and objectives in the Water Resources chapter of the Kane County 2030 Land Resource Management Plan.

"This is just the beginning of a long-range process," said Schuch, while noting that "In Kane County, the shallow and deep aquifers are declining and the quality of the Fox River is questionable."

For more about the water issues facing Kane County and region, see the "[What Our Water's Worth](#)" newsletter, where you can find: a map tracing where your local area water comes from (from Lake Michigan to the Fox River; tool provided by Chicago's Field Museum to calculate your water "footprint"; A Model Water Use Conservation Ordinance; the final version of Water 2050: Northeastern Illinois Water Supply/Demand Plan from CMAP - the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning; a report on Residential Water Use in Northeastern Illinois prepared for MPC by the University of Southern Illinois as well as presentations outlining, among many other things, how our use of water will change as well as grow between now and 2050.

As Kane County moves toward completion of a 2040 Land Resource Management Plan over the next few months, special attention will continue to be given to the challenge of providing a long-term, sustainable supply of drinking water.

How will Kane County provide an additional 50 million to 60 million gallons of water for another 300,000 people in the most efficient and environmentally responsible manner? Based on the final results of the [Kane County Water Resources Investigations](#) done by the Illinois State Water Survey (ISWS), the projected population growth in Kane County through 2049, and associated increased demand, will cause several critical water supply issues of concern in the deep aquifer, shallow aquifer, and surface water supplies.

Despite the progress made by Kane County in recent years in the form of an unparalleled effort by the state, region, county and municipalities to address long-term supply planning, the county Regional Planning Commission has identified and the County Board has reaffirmed with the adoption of the [2040 Conceptual Land Use Strategy](#), the need to include water supply as one of the three challenges of the [2040 Plan](#). The other challenges are traffic congestion and diverse, affordable housing.

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