

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION COUNCIL OF MILWAUKEE COUNTY

c/o City of Glendale, 5909 North Milwaukee River Parkway, Glendale, WI 53209

### **RESOLUTION REGARDING THE SPEAKER'S TASK FORCE ON WATER QUALITY**

WHEREAS, The Intergovernmental Cooperation Council (ICC) includes the mayor, village president or administrator from each of the 19 municipalities inside Milwaukee County. The ICC meets to share best practices in delivery of public services, to discuss ways in which to save tax money and enhance services through cooperative efforts, and to discuss and advocate for change in state and federal law that are of common interest to ICC members. The ICC was created pursuant to Wisconsin Statutes 66.0301; and

Wisconsin Assembly Speaker Robin Vos announced the creation of a special legislative committee, the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality, on February 11, 2019, in reaction to a report showing widespread contamination in private wells in southwestern Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality is a bi-partisan committee consisting of 16 members of the State Assembly and Senate; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force has been asked to make recommendations on assessing and improving the quality of surface water and groundwater with public hearings scheduled in 12 Wisconsin municipalities to gather information on the specific concerns in the various regions of the State; and

WHEREAS, a wide range of water quality and quantity issues have been raised in the early stage of this process, including the regulatory response to Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) combined sewer overflows into Lake Michigan and their impact on water quality; and

WHEREAS, the MMSD is a regional government agency that provides water reclamation and flood management services for about 1.1 million people in 28 communities in the Greater Milwaukee Area. The service area's conveyance system consists of separate sewers which cover approximately 95% and combined sewers which cover approximately 5% of the entire service area; and

WHEREAS, sewage overflows in the Milwaukee region have been reduced from 50-60 per year down to 2-3 per year since the Deep Tunnel went on line in 1993 and the volume of sewage overflows has dropped from 8-9 billion gallons to approximately one billion gallons annually during the same period; and

WHEREAS, combined sewage overflows mostly consist of stormwater and are sometimes necessary during heavy rain events to prevent sewage from backing up into basements; and

WHEREAS, the EPA's goal for capturing and cleaning wastewater for systems like MMSD's is 85% and MMSD's performance since 1994 is 98.4%; and

WHEREAS, the Deep Tunnel has prevented more than 125 billion gallons of wastewater and stormwater from polluting Lake Michigan by capturing and storing those flows for full treatment after peak stormwater flows have passed; and

WHEREAS, while contributions of polluted stormwater runoff from urban and rural areas vary across the six Greater Milwaukee Watersheds, on average, nonpoint sources, i.e., stormwater runoff sources, contribute approximately 90% of the average annual loads of bacteria compared to approximately 10% attributed to sewage overflows and sewage treatment plants, according to modeled data prepared and published by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), *A Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update for the Greater Milwaukee Watersheds* (Updated May 2013)<sup>i</sup>; and

WHEREAS, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* stated in its Rivers Reborn Special Report (June 7, 2014), “Buoyed by tougher environmental regulations and \$5 billion in improvements, from the building of the deep tunnel system to the removal of dams and reduction in phosphorus, the Milwaukee River is cleaner and more valuable economically and ecologically than at any point in the past 100 years<sup>ii</sup>,” and

WHEREAS, property values have increased more than \$1 billion along the Milwaukee Riverwalk since 1994, according to the City of Milwaukee; and

WHEREAS, lake sturgeon, salmon, trout, bass, and walleye are among the more than 30 native species of fish living in the revitalized Milwaukee River, and

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has recently completed a public hearing process for a renewed discharge permit applicable to the District’s water reclamation system, during which public process there was support for the District’s program to control stormwater runoff by investing in Green Infrastructure to manage rain water where it falls, thus reducing overflow volumes during large wet weather events; and

WHEREAS, the newly re-issued discharge permit contains restrictions on combined sewer overflows which are consistent with state and federal requirements that are applicable to those overflows, and with which the MMSD fully complies; and

WHEREAS, the District annually engages in financial planning on a minimum of a six-year horizon, which allows it to maintain relatively stable tax levy and user charge billings, allowing the District to maintain its excellent bond ratings for its debt, thus lowering the financing costs for its capital expenditures; and

WHEREAS, since the District is the dominant participant in the State of Wisconsin Clean Water Fund program, the strength of the District's bond rating is a consideration impacting the rating assigned to the bonds issued by Wisconsin's Clean Water Fund Loan program. A very strong District bond rating has a favorable impact on the bond rating assigned to bonds issued by Wisconsin's Clean Water Fund Loan program. Thus, the District's strong bond rating helps reduce the financing costs (higher bond rating lowering the interest rate) for all participants in Wisconsin's Clean Water Fund Loan program; and

WHEREAS, the District’s current six-year capital financing plan includes \$834 million (and another \$606 million in debt service payments related to prior years capital expenditures) in capital expenditures to maintain and improve the regional capital infrastructure that helps protect public health, homes and businesses, and our rivers and Lake Michigan; and

WHEREAS, future investments in clean water need to be cost-effective to avoid creating an undue financial burden on businesses and residents that could undermine the region's ability to remain competitive in a dynamic global economy;

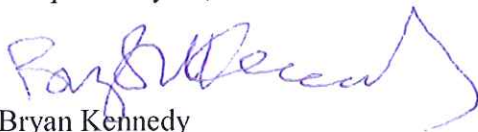
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION COUNCIL, that the ICC supports the current discharge permit which runs through 2024 as its requirements will keep the region in compliance with the Clean Water Act while making progress on remedying future threats to water quality in a cost-effective way; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the ICC respectfully requests that the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality state in its final report that the MMSD has invested \$4 billion in infrastructure improvements successfully reducing the occurrence of sewage overflows from 50-60 per year to 2-3 since the deep tunnel became operational in 1993 preventing more than 125 billion gallons of wastewater and stormwater from polluting Lake Michigan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, while contributions of polluted stormwater runoff from urban and rural areas vary across the six Greater Milwaukee Watersheds, on average nonpoint sources, i.e., stormwater runoff sources, contribute approximately 90% of the average annual loads of bacteria compared to approximately 10% attributed to sewage overflows and sewage treatment plants, according to modeled data prepared and published by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), *A Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update for the Greater Milwaukee Watersheds* (Updated May 2013)<sup>iii</sup>; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution, upon adoption by the ICC, be submitted as part of the record for the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality, and distributed to the Governor of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Attorney General, all members of the state legislature, secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection.

Adopted May 13, 2019



Bryan Kennedy  
Chairman

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<sup>i</sup> SEWRPC Planning Report No. 50, *A Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update for the Greater Milwaukee Watersheds*, 2007, amended 2013.

<sup>ii</sup> Smith, Paul A. (June 7, 2014). \$5 billion revival leaves Milwaukee River cleaner, more valuable. *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, p.1. <http://archive.jsonline.com/news/milwaukee/5-billion-revival-leaves-milwaukee-river-cleaner-more-valuable-b9948752z1-261880681.html/>.

<sup>iii</sup> SEWRPC Planning Report No. 50, *A Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update for the Greater Milwaukee Watersheds*, 2007, amended 2013.