



Office of the Mayor

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Mayor's Initiative to Protect and Improve Madison's Drinking Water

Nothing is more important than the quality of our drinking water. Madison families should not have to question the safety of the water coming out of their taps. This plan is designed to protect and improve the quality of Madison's drinking water, and restore public confidence in the Water Utility.

Madison is fortunate to have an abundant supply of clean, healthy drinking water, supplied by an underground aquifer. Water from aquifer sources is protected from most environmental and other contaminants. Many other communities receive their drinking water from surface water sources. Surface water sources have a number of disadvantages compared to aquifer sources, most importantly that they are more susceptible to contamination (as Milwaukee experienced a number of years ago with their *cryptosporidium* outbreak).

However, aquifer sources are more likely to include a higher content of naturally-occurring minerals such as iron and manganese. The presence of manganese in particular has generated a great deal of public discussion regarding Madison's water supply.

Ensuring that the water supply is safe and reliable is one of the most important responsibilities of city government. To that end, the mayor is directing the following steps be taken to protect and improve Madison's drinking water supply:

- 1. Develop and implement wellhead protection plans for all 24 City of Madison wells.** State regulations only require protection plans for new City wells. The Water Utility has already moved to exceed that standard, and has developed protection plans for both new and existing wells. The mayor is directing the Water Utility to accelerate their work and develop protection plans for at least four wells per year, so protection plans are in place for all City wells by 2010 at the latest.
- 2. Continue the aggressive, ongoing manganese flushing and monitoring plan.** The mayor has directed the Water Utility, in cooperation with the Health Department, to carry out an aggressive plan for reducing the amount of manganese in the water supply and monitoring the presence of manganese and other minerals citywide. This plan includes high-velocity, uni-directional flushing and ongoing, extensive monitoring. The monitoring plan will be used to determine when additional flushing is required, and if other steps to reduce manganese in the water supply are necessary, such as placing wells on standby or installing filters at wellheads. The Water Utility will also continue its practice of reviewing chlorine levels on a daily basis and monitoring for indications of the presence of microbial agents such as bacteria and viruses.
- 3. Improve public outreach.** The mayor is requesting that the Board of Water Commissioners and the Joint Board of Health for Madison and Dane County hold a joint hearing to discuss issues related to the City's water supply. This is to be in addition to the neighborhood hearings already underway in specific well service areas regarding manganese. The mayor is requesting that the Board of Water Commissioners

provide additional opportunities for public input and education regarding specific water quality issues at their regular meetings. The mayor is also directing the development and publication of additional public information materials for the Water Utility web site, neighborhood newsletters and other outlets. Finally, the mayor is directing Water Utility management to permanently fill the Water Quality Specialist position – for which public outreach should be a key responsibility – as soon as possible.

4. Strengthen the connection between water issues and public health. The mayor has asked Director of Public Health Dr. Thomas Schlenker to serve as a member of the Board of Water Commissioners, to ensure that public health issues related to water are addressed in a thorough, ongoing manner. The mayor will introduce the required ordinance change for approval at the next Common Council meeting.

5. Develop an enhanced Water Utility website. The mayor is directing the development of Water Utility website enhancements that will enable members of the public to easily enter their address and obtain information about the water quality in their well area, as well as alerts to any special advisories that may be in effect. The mayor has asked the Water Utility to work with the City's award-winning Information Services department on this initiative.

6. Implement enforceable performance standards for the Water Utility. Include enforceable performance benchmarks for the Water Utility. These benchmarks will be in areas such as water quality, public outreach, infrastructure improvement, internal management and successful fulfillment of all aspects of the mayor's plan. These benchmarks will also require the involvement of Utility staff in a participatory process for reviewing and assessing Utility practices and procedures, and recommending strategies for improvement.

7. Accelerate efforts to replace aging infrastructure and plan for new growth. The mayor is directing the Water Utility to complete by the fall its financing and implementation recommendations for the Infrastructure Management Plan, to ensure the timely replacement of aging infrastructure.

8. Create a technical water quality peer review task force. Recruit representatives from organizations such as the Department of Natural Resources, the State Lab of Hygiene and the University of Wisconsin for an ad hoc task force that will assist the Water Utility and Board of Water Commissioners in reviewing water quality and supply analyses, technical data related to the annual water quality report, and emerging research related to water quality issues.

9. Create a citizen focus group. Form a focus group of citizens to review the annual water report in order to ensure that it adequately answers the questions residents have about water quality issues in plain language.

10. Build collaborative relationships with neighboring water utilities. As with regional economic collaboration, we must work collaboratively with our neighbors who share our aquifer to assure safe and plentiful water as we gain population. In Dane County alone, some 30 water utilities draw from this aquifer.