



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 9, 2006

Governor Blagojevich orders statewide water supply study

Governor issues executive order to study state's water needs to protect against shortages and develop regional plans

SPRINGFIELD – Following last summer's long and costly drought, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today issued an Executive Order to develop a comprehensive, statewide water supply planning and management strategy. The Department of Natural Resources Office of Water Resources will oversee the process in conjunction with the State Water Survey (SWS).

"It is critical for Illinois to get ahead of the curve when it comes to water supply planning," said Gov. Blagojevich. "Last summer's drought demonstrated to us that careful management of our water must be a priority so we always have enough supply for people to drink and use, for our industries like agriculture, and for our fish and wildlife habitats."

While Illinois is on the shores of Lake Michigan, one of the largest freshwater sources in the world, and has significant sources of both groundwater and surface water, portions of the state face legal and physical restraints to increasing water supplies. Shortages like last year's drought, and the restrictions it triggered, have so far been rare, but the growing population of the state and increasing demand for water will strain current sources.

Previously, the SWS, the Illinois Interagency Coordinating Committee on Groundwater, and the Illinois State Water Plan Task Force have identified the Priority Water Quantity Planning Areas that are most at risk for water shortages and conflicts. By December 31, 2006, at least two of those areas will have Regional Water Quantity Plans in process.

The most likely candidates for those Plans are the Mahomet aquifer and the Northeastern Illinois Deep Aquifer. The Mahomet aquifer serves the communities of Decatur and Champaign-Urbana. Due to the growth in the area along with major livestock facilities, agricultural irrigation, and power plants, east central Illinois is likely to experience strain on their water supplies. The growth of the western suburbs beyond the reach of Lake Michigan water makes northeastern Illinois a priority, where shallow aquifers and surface water sources are already strained.

Locally based regional water supply planning committees will also be developed with financial and technical support from the state. The local committees will help collect the data needed to draft these plans, and also outline and approve their regional plans. This data will include figures like the total usable amount of groundwater and surface water in the planning area and projected water supply and demand.

Today's announcement comes in conjunction with the release of the "Troubled Water: Meeting Future Water Needs in Illinois" report prepared by the Campaign for Sensible Growth, Metropolitan Planning Council and Openlands Project. The report outlines the current challenges facing the water supply in Illinois, as well as their recommendations, which include a regional planning study such as the one announced today.

"We're pleased that the governor recognizes the concerns reported in the study and has so quickly mobilized his administration to address the challenges facing our water supplies," said Joyce O'Keefe, Deputy Director of the Openlands Project.