

Regional Water Supply Planning for East Central Illinois
Mahomet Aquifer Consortium
Annual Progress Report
March 27, 2007

Overview

To implement the requirements of the Executive Order 2006-01, the Mahomet Aquifer Consortium (MAC) started a three year regional water supply planning process with a grant of funding from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Office of Water Resources (IDNR/OWR). The region to be studied encompasses the counties of Vermilion, Iroquois, Ford, Champaign, McLean, Macon, DeWitt, Piatt, Woodford, Tazewell, Mason, Logan, Menard, Cass and Sangamon.

The Grant Agreement between IDNR/OWR and the MAC requires progress reporting on an annual basis, not later than the end of March each year, to report and discuss progress toward the objectives of the project and fulfillment of the obligations and duties of the agreement. This report serves to address this requirement.

Task 1: Convening the Regional Water Supply Planning Committee

The grant agreement was executed and the MAC received the funding for year 1 in December 2006. In early January 2007, approximately 600 invitations were mailed to potential organizations and individuals soliciting participation in the first organizational meeting to develop the Regional Water Supply Planning Committee (RWSPC). The East Central Illinois RWSPC includes twelve members, one each from the following interest areas – Agriculture, Small Business, Public, Water Authorities, Water Utilities, Municipal, Environmental, County, Rural Water Districts, Industry, Electric Generating Utilities, and Soil & Water Conservation Districts. The members are also geographically balanced by region as follows: West region – Cass, Logan, Mason, Menard, Sangamon and Tazewell counties; Central region – DeWitt, Macon, McLean, Piatt and Woodford counties; East region – Champaign, Ford, Iroquois and Vermilion counties.

In an effort to encourage as much public participation as possible, a separate public meeting was held on January 31, 2007 in Clinton, IL. The meeting was also held for the purpose of informing and educating the general public on the RWSPC process, and ISWS and ISGS representatives provided an educational general overview presentation on water supply planning. The RWSPC development process was outlined, a question and answer period allowed for public input, and applications were distributed and accepted for the organizational meeting on February 16, 2007 in Urbana. A press release was issued and the meeting notice was published in major newspapers throughout the 15 county area, as well as television and radio media coverage of the meeting announcement. Approximately 40 people attended and overall comments were positive.

The organizational meeting on February 16, 2007 in Urbana was well attended, with 61 of 65 registered participants in attendance, and the total attendance including speakers and guests was approximately 85. The morning session included background and general education information on water supply planning, while the afternoon was devoted to development of the 12 member RWSPC from the group. Each interest area was asked to nominate one candidate from each of the three geographic areas to represent their interest area on the 12 member RWSPC, including identification of primary/preferred candidate. The groups were then asked to report back to the overall assembly near the conclusion of the meeting.

On February 20, 2007 the MAC Board of Directors met to review the applications of the nominees. The primary/preferred candidates from 10 of the 12 interest areas were selected by the board with the other two areas, environment and agriculture (who did not return a primary/preferred candidate), having their candidate selected based upon nominees and geographic balance. The final 12 RWSPC members selected include four representatives from each of the three geographic regions. Ethnic and gender diversity was considered in making the final appointments.

The first meeting of the East Central RWSPC was held on March 9, 2007 in Monticello. At the meeting, an interim Chair and Vice-Chair were selected. RWSPC operational and governance guidelines were discussed/drafted and are in progress. A second meeting of the RWSPG was set for March 30, 2007 in Tremont, IL. Continuation of the discussion of operational and governance guidelines, the RFP for selection of a consultant to perform demand projections and an educational program are planned for the meeting on the 30th. The group also planned to further discuss the Chair and Vice-Chair selections.

Given the above summary of progress, the MAC considers the requirements and milestones of Task 1 complete and the overall schedule and budget on target.

Task 2: Water Demand Projections

The MAC Board of Directors has prepared a draft Request for Proposals (RFP) for the purpose of selecting a consultant to perform the water demand scenarios to 2050. An initial list of consultants has also been developed. The draft RFP and list of consultants will be provided to the RWSPC for consideration and discussion at their March 30, 2007 meeting.

Task 3: Development and Evaluation of Water Supply Options

No progress to report.

Task 4: Education and Communications

The following items serve to summarize the progress on this task:

- January 31, 2007 public meeting with general water supply planning educational presentation by ISWS and ISGS.
- Media Coverage (newspaper, television, and radio) of January 31, 2007 public meeting.
- Updates and postings regarding the RWSPC on the MAC website.
- The RWSPC has already begun discussion on a website of their own to keep the public informed.
- A press release is being prepared to announce the committee selection and charge.
- The March 30, 2007 RWSPC meeting agenda includes a "Water Supply Planning 101" educational session for the committee members.

Public Feedback

The meetings held to-date have been well attended and overall resulted in favorable feedback from attendees. The following items serve to summarize some of the comments received thus far:

- Weighting of the RWSPC membership should have included more emphasis on population versus geography.
- Educational sessions have resulted in very positive feedback from the public – eye-opening experience and something everyone should learn more about.
- Some have commented this is a very difficult task and wished us “good luck.”
- Several stakeholders have expressed their concern about being dominated by urban large users, due in part to a lack of understanding about the differences in aquifer yield and sustainability in different geographic regions.
- Some have commented on the concern about who represents those utilizing the Mahomet Aquifer for water supply, but are located outside the 15 county planning area.
- Concerns about dramatically increased demands for water from industry, public supplies, agriculture and private use have been voiced with a suggestion that conservation practices need be employed to a greater extent.

Problems / What Might Be Done Differently

- Allow more time in the process completion of the administrative process involved with the grant initiation.
- At this point we do not have any problems to report on the completion of Task 2: Water Demand Projections.