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For Immediate Release

February 12, 2008

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MEDIA RELEASE

Where's The Strong Great Lakes Compact Bill?

Again, Legislators Asked to Introduce The Strong Compact for a Strong Wisconsin

Madison- Today, local elected officials, citizens, and conservation organizations once again called on state legislators and Governor Doyle to immediately introduce **The Strong Compact for a Strong Wisconsin**. For nearly two years, statewide support for the strong version of the Compact has poured into the Capitol. With only fifteen scheduled days left in the legislative session, time is running very short to introduce and pass this lengthy piece of legislation.

At the close of business Monday night, an announcement was made that a hearing will be held this Thursday in the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources on a preliminary draft with invited testimony only.

“The announcement of a hearing this week on a preliminary draft is a good sign. Since the preliminary draft is not yet available for review, we look forward to reviewing a complete draft for the provisions of a Strong Compact soon. With only 15 days left in the session, it’s time for the legislature to get the job done and pass the Strong Compact,” said Peter McAvoy of the Sixteenth Street Community Health Center.

For nearly two years, support for **The Strong Compact for a Strong Wisconsin** has poured into the Capitol:

- The Strong Compact was selected as one of just four Conservation Priorities for the 2007-2008 legislative session by a coalition of more than 50 conservation, sporting and environmental organizations and hundreds of citizens,
- More than 400 citizens in 2007 and nearly 300 citizens last week asked their legislators to support the Strong Compact in Madison on Conservation Lobby Day,
- More than 40 local elected officials and 50 organizations have signed on in support of the Strong Compact,

- Thousands of citizen comments (calls, emails, postcards, letters) have poured into the Capitol over the last six months.

In addition, a recent poll found overwhelming support for not just a Compact, but the strong version of the Compact. The poll also showed that support was non-partisan and statewide. People identifying themselves as Republican, Democrat or Independent support the Compact roughly equally (83%, 76%, and 82%, respectively). About 83% of poll respondents from non-Great Lakes shore communities support passage of the Great Lakes Compact, compared to 77% of respondents living in Great Lakes shore communities.

“I may not live on a Great Lake, but I know that the Great Lakes support our economy and lifestyle, and provide beautiful places to visit for Wisconsinites and people from bordering states. The Strong Great Lakes Compact is needed to protect the lakes into the future, and the legislature should pass it this session!” said Matt Boyer, a student at UW-La Crosse.

The Great Lakes Compact is an agreement, signed two years ago by the Governors of the eight Great Lakes states that would prevent diversion of Great Lakes water by industries and municipalities, with some limited exceptions. All eight legislatures of the Great Lakes states must approve the Compact, and Congress must ratify it before it takes effect.

The Strong Compact for a Strong Wisconsin includes the basic Compact plus seven points of enabling language that will help the legislation to be better implemented and enforced. The seven points include:

- Standards for environmentally responsible return flow;
- Mechanisms for managing and regulating in-basin water use;
- Requirements for communities seeking a diversion to meet enforceable, demonstrable water conservation standards;
- Requires communities looking to extend or build new water supply pipes/systems as part of a diversion request to comply with current regional water supply and quality plans;
- Clarification of the Compact’s treatment of bottled water withdrawals;
- Provisions for adequate citizen participation in a practical and protective manner;
- Requirements that communities applying for new or expanded diversions meet the return flow, citizen participation, conservation practices and compliance with regional plans *upon enactment of Wisconsin’s legislation.*

“If I were a legislator right now, I would be committed to making up for the embarrassing state budget process. I would want to redeem myself and demonstrate that I’m not part of a do-nothing legislature by passing strong version of the Great Lakes Compact,” said Steve Schmuki, a resident of Waukesha.

Following the press conference, thousands of citizen letters supporting **The Strong Compact for a Strong Wisconsin** were delivered to the Governor and members of the Senate and Assembly.

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If you would like to arrange an interview with a citizen lobbyist,
please contact Anne Sayers at the contact info above.

To learn more about The Strong Compact for a Strong Wisconsin,
please review the *Wisconsin Conservation Priorities 2007-2008* at
<http://www.conservationvoters.org/WLCVI/Public/index.php?custID=20>