

NR 854 Water Supply Service Area Plans

November 2024

This factsheet briefly summarizes the purpose and key elements of NR 854 (Water Supply Service Area Plans) which went into effect in June of 2024.

Purpose Of NR 854

NR 854 establishes procedures and requirements for public water supply systems (PWS) to follow when preparing water supply service area plans. The rule establishes a process over the plan period for public water supply systems to help ensure those systems can provide an adequate supply of water to their customers. [S. 281.348 Wis. Stats.](#)

NR 854 Applies To

Public water supply systems serving a population of 10,000 or more that operate their own wells or surface water intakes.

Key Elements To Include In The Plan

Water supply service area plans are for general planning purposes, and do not include the level of detail typically seen in engineering or facility planning. A water supply service area plan must include:

- Information about existing water sources, population projections and future water demands.
- Inventory of the sources and quantities of the current water supplies in the area.
- Identification of water supply options.
- Delineation of the area to which the public water supply system may provide water.
- An assessment of the environmental impacts of carrying out any significant recommendations of the plan.
- An analysis of how the water supply service area plan aligns with existing comprehensive and wastewater facility plans.
- An opportunity for the public to provide comment on the proposed water supply service area plan.

Additionally, water supply service area plans that require department approval need to include:

- Delineation of the proposed water supply service area.
- A cost-effective analysis of regional and individual water supply and water conservation alternatives.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) does not need to review or approve the plan unless:

1. The public water system applies for a new or increased diversion of Great Lakes water.
2. The public water system applies for a water withdrawal from the Great Lakes basin requiring a new or increased water use permit.

For more information, visit the DNR's water use webpage

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/WaterUse/ImplementationRules>

Contact Information

This rule is administered by the Water Use section of the DNR **not** your DNR public water liaison or engineer, therefore, questions should be directed to the Water Use section at:

DNRWaterUseRegistration@wisconsin.gov or 608-266-2299.



Photo Credit: WI DNR

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

By when do plans have to be developed?

Applicable communities are required to develop and have a water supply service area plan by Dec. 31, 2025. Communities that don't yet serve 10,000 or more customers, but will meet that criteria sometime beyond Dec. 31, 2025, shall prepare a water supply service area plan before the date when the public water supply system begins to serve a population of 10,000 or more.

Does NR 854 apply to public water systems in the Mississippi River basin?

Yes. NR 854 applies statewide. Public water supply systems located in the Mississippi River basin that serve a population of 10,000 or more and operate their own wells or surface water intakes are required to develop a water supply service area plan.

Does NR 854 apply to consecutive systems?

NR 854 does not apply to a consecutive system if it does not operate its own wells or surface water intakes.

Does the DNR review or approve water supply service area plans?

The DNR is only required to review and approve water supply service area plans when:

1. The public water system applies for a new or increased diversion of Great Lakes water or;
2. Applies for a withdrawal from the Great Lakes basin requiring a new or increased water use permit.

Otherwise, the plan does not need to be submitted to the DNR.

Can a system use parts of an applicable comprehensive plan or other water plans?

Yes. The DNR recognizes that some plan elements may have already been developed in a community's comprehensive plan, Public Service Commission of Wisconsin document or other documents prepared by a system for its own planning purposes.

Are there examples of developed water supply service area plans?

Yes. There are links to several water supply service area plans developed for diversion applications on the [Great Lakes Compact Implementation Rules](#) webpage. Look for the plans under the "Additional Resources" section on the webpage.

Should I contact my public water liaison or engineer if I have questions?

No. Your questions should be directed to the Water Use section of the DNR at DNRWaterUseRegistration@wisconsin.gov or 608-266-2299.

This document is intended solely as guidance and does not contain any mandatory requirements except where requirements found in statute or administrative rule are referenced. Any regulatory decisions made by the Department of Natural Resources in any matter addressed by this guidance will be made by applying the governing statutes and administrative rules to the relevant facts.

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This publication is available in alternative format (large print, Braille, audiotope, etc.) upon request. Please call 608-266-1054 for more information.