SUMMARY NOTES OF THE NOVEMBER 21, 2025, MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR *A PROSPECTUS FOR A REGIONAL WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE*

The November 21, 2025 meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for *A Prospectus for a Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update* was convened online at 10:04 a.m. The meeting was called to order by Committee Secretary Ms. Laura Herrick, Chief Engineer with the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. Attendance was taken using the online software.

Members Present

Laura K. Herrick, Secretary ..... Chief Environmental Engineer, SEWRPC
Alan Barrows..... Land Resources Manager, Waukesha County
Kevin Berg ..... Engineering Services Director, Walworth County Metropolitan Sewerage District
Mandy Bonneville ..... Deputy Director/County Conservationist, Walworth County Land and Resource Management Department
Gavin Dehnert..... Emerging Contaminants Scientist, University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute
Tim Detzer ..... Principal Environmental Engineer/County Conservationist, Milwaukee County Environmental Services
Matt Diebel ..... Hydrologist, U.S. Geological Survey
Dave Giordano ..... Executive Director, Root Pike Watershed Initiative Network
Elizabeth Hellman..... Water Quality Compliance and Lab Services Manager, WEC Energy Group

Anthony Jazdzyk ..... Sanitary and Stormwater Permit Compliance Manager, City of Milwaukee
Jamie Ludovic..... Chief Community Development Officer, Washington County
Max Marechal..... City Engineer, Engineering Department, City of West Bend
Janette Marsh ..... Nonpoint Source Technical Program Manager States and Tribes, Water Division U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5
Cheryl Nenn..... Riverkeeper, Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Katie Praedel..... Field Integration Leader, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Mark Riedel..... Total Maximum Daily Load Manager, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Rachel Sabre ..... Water Resources Management Specialist, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Brett Schmidt ..... Wastewater Engineer, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Kevin Shafer ..... Executive Director, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
Chelsea Snowden-Smith ..... Stormwater Utility Engineering Technician, City of Kenosha
Sue Swanson ..... Director and State Geologist, Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey
Nate Tillis ..... Wastewater Utility Executive Director, Racine Water and Wastewater Utility

Staff Present

Joel E. Dietl..... Chief Land Use Planner, SEWRPC
Benjamin R. McKay ..... Deputy Director, SEWRPC
Aaron W. Owens..... Principal Planner, SEWRPC
Emily E. Porter..... Planner, SEWRPC
Thomas M. Slawski ..... Chief Biologist, SEWRPC

Ms. Herrick welcomed the attendees to the first TAC meeting for a *Prospectus for a Regional Water Quality Management Plan* and asked for introductions from each TAC member. Ms. Herrick then introduced the agenda for the meeting to review the history of water quality management planning in the Region, the purpose of a Regional Water Quality Management Plan update, and the scope of the Prospectus document.

[Secretary's Note: The agenda for this meeting is attached herein as Exhibit A.]

REVIEW OF REGIONAL WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT HISTORY IN SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

Background and Overview

Ms. Herrick began the presentation by introducing the role of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (Commission or SEWRPC) in Regional planning and in water quality management. She informed the TAC that SEWRPC serves seven counties in southeastern Wisconsin and is both the official areawide planning agency and state-designated and federally recognized water quality management planning agency for the Region. She explained how the Commission's role as the water quality management planning agency has shaped the Regional Water Quality Management Plan (RWQMP). She stated that the purpose of the RWQMP was to serve as the foundation for all of the Commission's water quality planning efforts, including summarizing Regional water quality data, providing recommendations with the goal of "fishable and swimmable waters," and aligning the plan with the requirements of Wisconsin Administrative Code NR-121. As a follow-up to this introduction, Mr. Berg asked when NR-121 was created. Ms. Porter responded that it was created in 1979 around the time of the original SEWRPC RWQMP.

Ms. Herrick briefly reviewed the water quality management timeline for the Region from 1960 to 1979. She highlighted key SEWRPC Technical and Planning Reports related to the RWQMP, emphasizing the importance of a 1964 water quality benchmark study and the enactment of the Federal Clean Water Amendments in 1972 as building blocks for the adoption of the first RWQMP in 1979. Ms. Herrick next provided an overview of 1979 SEWRPC Planning Report No. 30, *A Regional Water Quality Management Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin* (PR-30). She explained that the Plan was designed to meet the Congressional mandate of "fishable and swimmable" waters by assessing water quality conditions from 1964-1975 and addressing sources of pollution for the entire seven-county Region. Ms. Herrick summarized the scope of PR-30 and recommendations from the Plan. These recommendations were grouped into land use, point source pollution abatement, nonpoint source pollution abatement, sludge management, and water quality monitoring plan categories.

Ms. Herrick next showed a continuation of the previous water quality management timeline from 1987 through 2025. She highlighted the 1995 SEWRPC Memorandum Report No. 93, *A Regional Water Quality Management Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin: An Update and Status Report* (MR-93), which was an update to the 1979 RWQMP as well as the 2007 SEWRPC Planning Report No. 50, *A Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update for the Greater Milwaukee Watersheds* (PR-50), as the most recent RWQMP update. Ms. Herrick then reviewed the contents of MR-93 and explained that the 1995 update served as a status report to the RWQMP and only reviewed a subset of the Region's streams and lakes to assess if water quality and water use objectives were being met. She noted that progress varied by water body and that not all objectives of the RWQMP were being met at the time of MR-93. Ms. Herrick also highlighted MR-93 findings related to the 1979 Plan's land use, pollution abatement, water quality monitoring, lake management, Milwaukee Harbor Estuary, and groundwater management recommendations. Mr. Giordano asked if any fish sampling occurred or was made available in the 1995 report and Mr. Slawski responded that only water quality data was assessed for MR-93. Mr. McKay then made a comment based on the 2024 review and update of VISION 2050 that single-family residential development has occurred at lower than recommended densities in sewered communities since 2010.

Next, Ms. Herrick discussed the 2007 RWQMP update completed in conjunction with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) 2020 Facilities Plan. She explained that this water quality update only included five watersheds within the greater Milwaukee area. This update assessed changes in water quality since 1975 and contained recommendations related to point and nonpoint source pollution abatement, land use, groundwater management, and RWQMP implementation strategies.

Following this overview, Ms. Herrick then paused for questions or comments related to the history of the RWQMP. Ms. Snowden-Smith asked where the initial focus of high groundwater recharge areas was in the Region. Ms. Herrick pointed her toward SEWRPC Technical Report No. 37, stating that this report included groundwater recharge maps. Mr. McKay recommended Ms. Snowden-Smith look into the Kenosha County Comprehensive Plan for this information and Mr. Giordano noted that the Pike River Watershed Plan has groundwater recharge maps for a part of Kenosha County.

Ms. Marsh then asked if there were any plans for cross-walking the three plans (PR-30, MR-93, and PR-50) in the update. She pointed out that the recommendations of each plan were very specific by topic and it could be beneficial to consider how these different components can be better integrated in the RWQMP update. Ms. Herrick agreed that this is something we can consider for future updates.

Prospectus for a Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update

Ms. Herrick transitioned from discussing the history of water quality management planning in the Region to the Commission's current Prospectus effort. She stated that the goal of the Prospectus is to identify a workplan for a RWQMP update to once again support the goal of "fishable and swimmable" waters for the entire Region. She stated that the Prospectus will establish the need and purpose of an update, identify the scope and content of the update, describe the efforts needed to evaluate historical and current water quality conditions, recommend the most feasible means for organizing and accomplishing the required work, determine a work schedule, and recommend a budget and potential sources of funding for the update. Mr. Riedel asked if a section about success stories from the Region could be included in the RWQMP update. He referenced that the Milwaukee River once caught fire and said that water quality has come a long way and a lot has been done to improve conditions in the Region. Ms. Herrick agreed with his point, adding that efforts that are working should be included in a RWQMP update.

Ms. Herrick next showed a series of maps with the counties, municipalities, watersheds, and refined sanitary sewer service areas that will be included in the Prospectus. She suggested that Commission staff could investigate further regionalization of wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) in the RWQMP update and noted that Silver Lake and Salem combined into one Village and combined their WWTPs in 2023. Mr. Shafer said that the Plan should look at regionalization of South Milwaukee's WWTP with MMSD. Mr. Berg added that combining the Sharon service area into the WalCoMet WWTP has been brought up numerous times over the years as well.

Ms. Herrick asked if there were any additional questions or comments regarding the Prospectus purpose and scope. In response, Ms. Nenn asked if water quality data from outside of the Commission's planning area but within watersheds of the Region can be included in the RWQMP update. Ms. Herrick explained that Commission staff did include the upper portions of the Milwaukee River watershed outside of the Region in the Chloride Impact Study and that this has been a point of discussion among staff for the Prospectus as well. She added that there are land use and population inventory challenges for areas outside of the Region, but from a watershed perspective it makes sense to include those areas.

DISCUSSION OF WATER QUALITY PRIORITIES AND PROSPECTUS SCOPE ITEMS

TAC Water Quality Survey

To commence a larger Prospectus scope discussion amongst the TAC, Ms. Porter began by reviewing results from a water quality survey completed by TAC members in October 2025. The survey revealed initial impressions and emerging priorities of the Committee to help guide Prospectus development efforts. Ms. Porter thanked members of the TAC for completing the survey and said that Commission staff received 20 responses. She first noted that the majority of the TAC members who took part in the survey believed that water quality has improved in the Region's lakes, rivers, and streams in the past 10-20 years. Ms. Porter then highlighted that the survey indicated that agriculture and development as the major threats to water

quality and that phosphorus, total suspended solids/sediment, and chlorides were the primary surface water quality constituents of greatest concern. She next discussed emerging contaminants of concern, stating that per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) were identified as a priority by 18 of the 20 survey respondents followed by microplastics (14 respondents), pharmaceuticals (10 respondents), and neonicotinoids (four respondents).

Ms. Porter continued her review of the survey results with current impressions of Lake Michigan water quality and groundwater quality. She noted that both have been included in previous RWQMP updates to varying degrees and that the survey indicated that members of the TAC are still concerned about Lake Michigan and groundwater quality. About 90 percent of the TAC members surveyed expressed that Lake Michigan water quality is a concern while 75 percent said they are concerned about groundwater quality in the Region. Mr. Riedel asked if harmful algal blooms (HABs) were captured under nutrients or considered on their own. He added that HABs were not specifically included in the survey but that they are a growing issue in Wisconsin. Ms. Porter and Ms. Herrick agreed and thanked Mr. Riedel for his comment. Ms. Herrick said that HABs will be important to consider for the Prospectus.

The final survey question asked the TAC if they believed that current regulations were protective of biota, human health, and recreational use. Ms. Porter said that half of the respondents were "unsure" if regulations were protective while 30 percent felt that regulations were protective, and 20 percent believed regulations were not protective enough. Ms. Porter expressed that she hopes members of the TAC will share their knowledge and experience about regulations and the levels of protection that they provide to help shed light on this topic moving forward.

Prospectus Scope Discussion

Next, Ms. Herrick led a Prospectus scope discussion to expand on the water quality concerns and priorities covered in the TAC survey. She posed two initial questions: 1) Which specific pollutants are most problematic in the Region's surface and groundwater and 2) Are there particular areas within the Region that experience more severe water quality degradation? Ms. Herrick then opened the floor for members of the TAC to share their thoughts.

Ms. Snowden-Smith cited issues that the City of Kenosha is having with chlorides and green infrastructure and recommended that the Prospectus look at alternatives to traditional winter maintenance activities. She noted that the use of chloride is particularly problematic for soil quality. Ms. Herrick said that the Chloride Impact Study discusses this topic and that the recommendations from the Study will be drawn on heavily in the RWQMP update. She mentioned that the upcoming SEWRPC Technical Report No. 66, *State of the Art for Chloride Management,* will focus on chloride alternatives and best management practices.

Mr. Riedel agreed that chlorides should be included as a water quality constituent of concern and liked the idea of referencing success stories in the Region as he mentioned earlier. He then added that HABs are important to consider and described the scope of research available on algal blooms. Mr. Riedel said that recent actions to control nitrogen and total phosphorus have changed the recipe (P:N ratios) in receiving waters for cyanobacteria—shifting these areas toward toxin producing HABs. He cited the sizable number of Wisconsin beach closures due to HABs and mentioned that there is an additive effect with climate change and warming waters. Mr. Giordano commented that the Region is seeing more issues with inland lakes having algal problems. He recommended there be a push for education on stream buffers and for agricultural buffers. Ms. Sabre echoed these concerns and said that total suspended sediments, phosphorus, and nitrates would be her priorities.

Ms. Ludovic suggested that the TAC consider water quality attributes to protect in the Region rather than focusing exclusively on water quality problems. She recommended a more positive reflection on the Region's water resources to help direct the focus for the RWQMP update and potential growth. Ms. Ludovic used data centers as an example of growth in the Region.

Mr. Schmidt commented that the effects of private on-site wastewater treatment systems (POWTS) on groundwater should be considered for the Plan update. There have been a large number of POWTS approved in recent years and this may be impacting groundwater quality in the Region. He noted that, from a facility planning standpoint, communities are looking to abandon WWTPs due to surface water phosphorus constraints and moving toward either development with POTWS or large POTWS that may pose a threat to groundwater.

Ms. Swanson suggested that susceptibility to groundwater contamination by specific pollutants due to natural landscape variability be considered. She referenced a 1997 study that identified particular regions that were more susceptible to pollution. She recommended soil mapping and an inventory of the over 10,000 new private wells in the Region be completed as an update to this study and to SEWRPC Technical Report No. 37, *Groundwater Resources of Southeastern Wisconsin*. Ms. Swanson added that this would help better define glacial deposits for mapping.

Mr. Dehnert commented that PFAS are potentially the most problematic contaminant in the Region but that we do not know where or to what extent PFAS are an issue in rivers and streams. He said that PFAS seems like it may be a large issue, but we cannot be sure yet. Ms. Marsh asked about 6 PPD, explaining that it is a stabilizer in rubber products that is a major concern in other parts of the country. Ms. Nenn added her concerns about PFAS as an additional emerging contaminant and told the TAC that there has been very little monitoring in water and sludge outside of the Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern. Ms. Nenn expressed that she is also concerned about growing CAFO sizes and the impacts of increased manure spreading on surface water quality and residential wells in terms of nitrates and bacteria—especially in the upper Milwaukee River Basin. Mr. Detzer seconded concerns about PFAS and suggested that microplastics also be included.

As a follow-up to TAC comments about emerging contaminants, Ms. Herrick asked for the Committee's thoughts on neonicotinoids. She referenced a recent WDNR study that looked at neonicotinoids in Wisconsin streams. Mr. Riedel informed the TAC that the use of neonicotinoid-coated seeds is banned on WDNR land and offered to look into any available data on this topic. Ms. Sabre said that WDNR staff sampled nine sites in the southeast region for neonicotinoids in 2025 in coordination with DATCP.

Ms. Herrick then asked about the Committee's level of concern about pharmaceuticals. Ms. Nenn responded that Milwaukee Riverkeeper has some data about both PFAS and pharmaceuticals that they can share. However, she added that pharmaceutical data is limited as it is difficult and expensive to monitor.

Mr. Diebel suggested splitting the question about which water quality issues are most important by the endpoint. As an example, he mentioned that phosphorus and sediment are probably most important for aquatic biota and recreational use, but not as important for drinking water. Mr. Diebel said that phosphorus and sediment are generally improving, but chloride levels are getting worse. He recommended considering significance alongside these trends.

Ms. Herrick next asked the TAC to provide their thoughts on the use of biological assessment parameters for WWTP criteria. She asked if the TAC found the use of biological assessment parameters effective and inquired about how frequently these assessments are used by plants to meet phosphorus criteria in the Region. Mr. Tillis responded that the Racine Wastewater Treatment Facility has not taken advantage of these assessments yet and that they have been meeting their effluent requirements. Mr. Schmidt recommended the TAC investigate tools like adaptive management and water quality trading and whether these tools have been utilized in the Region. Mr. Riedel responded that, while he is not certain what biological toxicity question there is related to these alternatives, adaptive management and water quality trading have become increasingly popular. He added that compliance is limited by instream criteria since conditions must meet the WisCALM phosphorus criteria of 0.075 mg/l for multiple years to be compliant. Mr. Riedel noted that the total maximum daily load (TMDL) for the Milwaukee River watershed makes it unique, and that there are a lot of load reductions on the stormwater side that are challenging for

communities. As a final comment, Ms. Nenn mentioned that the WDNR was looking at biological criteria as part of the last Triennial Review, but she was unsure what this review produced.

NEXT STEPS FOR THE PROSPECTUS

Ms. Herrick concluded the meeting by thanking the TAC for the helpful discussion. She then reviewed next steps for the Prospectus, informing the TAC that Commission staff plan to have the Prospectus document finished in December 2026. She said that there may be four additional meetings in the new year—tentatively in January, April, July, and October. The next meeting will serve as a continuation of the Prospectus scope discussion and include a conversation aimed at identifying major sources of pollution in the Region. She indicated that the meeting agendas, presentations, and summary notes along with draft Prospectus documents will be posted on the Water Quality page of the SEWRPC website at www.sewrpc.org/Regional-Planning/Water-Quality.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Herrick
Recording Secretary

Links and Resources Shared

Mr. Schmidt shared the following link with more information of 6PPD from the U.S. EPA: https://www.epa.gov/chemical-research/6ppd-quinone.

Ms. Marsh shared the U.S. EPA 6PPD/6PPD-quinone Action Plan. This plan can be found at FY 2025-2028 6PPD/6PPD-quinone Action Plan.

Ms. Marsh shared the following link with HAB forecasts from the U.S. EPA: https://www.epa.gov/habs/hab-forecasts.

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Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

Notice of Meeting and Agenda

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR

A PROSPECTUS FOR A REGIONAL WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

DATE: Friday, November 21, 2025

TIME: 10 am - Noon

TEAMS LINK:

Join the meeting now

Meeting ID: 299 378 674 161 51

Passcode: 3zT7Uf6w

AGENDA:

1. Introductions and Review of Roster
2. Overview of Regional Water Quality Management Plan History
3. Review of Prospectus Purpose and Goals
4. Summary of TAC Water Quality Survey Results
5. Begin Prospectus Content Discussion
    a. What water quality issues does the Region currently face?
    b. Which water quality constituents should be included in the RWQMP update?
6. Next Steps
7. Adjourn