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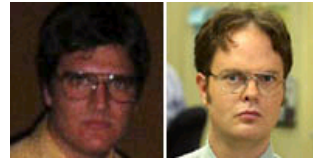
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Support for regional water planning group growing

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March 18, 2010

By STEVE LORD slord@stmedianetwork.com

Area municipalities and counties are joining to make sure the water spigots continue to flow throughout northern Illinois.

This month, Yorkville passed a resolution supporting a Northwest Water Planning Area that would include several area communities. Yorkville joins Aurora, North Aurora and Geneva, as well as the Metro West Council of Government, which represents cities in Kane, Kendall and DeKalb counties.

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Yorkville Mayor Valerie Burd is president of Metro West, which has been looking at regional water planning in the suburbs for more than a year. When the council passed its water planning area idea, it began looking for municipalities within Metro West to support the plan.

Exactly what the boundaries of a water planning area will look like depends on what kind of support it gets, and from where.

For Metro West, the point of the planning area is to avoid being forced to a regional solution by the state.

"Whoever wants to join, they can," Burd said. "But we're not going to force anyone."


Planning for water supply on a regional basis has become a hot topic in the past year, particularly with studies showing that aquifers are being depleted faster than they are being replenished while treaties limit how much water can be taken from Lake Michigan.

Water supply, conservation and quality have merged into one over-reaching issue: planning for a solid water supply in northern Illinois for years to come.


Mary Randle, executive director of Metro West, said the organization has gone beyond its three-county area to discuss water planning areas with other government groups, including the Lake County Municipal League and the Northwest Municipal Conference, the largest council of government in the Chicago area.

The idea would be for areas like Chicago, Cook County and parts of DuPage County, which get Lake Michigan water, to have their own planning area. Then there would be perhaps two planning areas in counties north, west and south of Chicago, perhaps stretching to Grundy and Boone counties, Randle said.

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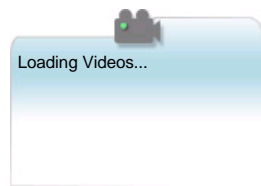
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"We'd like to make sure the non-Lake Michigan communities have autonomy from the Lake Michigan communities," Randle said. "Of course, we would all work together."

Randle pointed out that at one point, a state plan showed a board with municipalities and counties sharing a representative. Forming a voluntary planning board would assure more representation for the cities, she said.

Metro West still is in the formative stages of a water planning area, and Randle said officials are talking to area county board chairmen right now. They will present their idea to a water summit planned for March 22, sponsored by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

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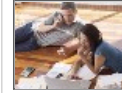
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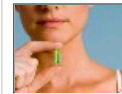
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