



# Northwest Water Planning Alliance 2020-2024 Strategic Plan

March 2020



# Acknowledgements

Special thanks to NWPA Executive Committee and Technical Advisory Committee members for engaging in the strategic planning process.

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# Introduction

Established in 2010, the Northwest Water Planning Alliance (NWPA) is responding to the need to collaborate to address water supply challenges. Formed by intergovernmental agreement, the NWPA consists of five councils of government – Barrington Area Council of Governments, Lake County Municipal League, McHenry County Council of Governments, Metro West Council of Government, and Northwest Municipal Conference and 5 counties – DeKalb, Kane, Kendall, Lake, and McHenry counties. The NWPA includes more than 80 communities, representing 1.4 million residents in the Chicago region.

Over the past 10 years, the NWPA has shed light on critical water issues facing groundwater and river dependent communities. The NWPA has provided a forum for elected officials, utility and resource managers, and others to learn the latest scientific research concerning the health of our water supplies. As a result, the region is more informed about pressing resource management issues -- from the over-withdrawal from our deep sandstone aquifers to chloride contamination of our shallow groundwater sources.

The NWPA advances solutions and best practices from the ground up. From the initial work to reduce outdoor water use to the latest efforts to minimize the unnecessary use of road salts, the NWPA harnesses member and partner expertise to design solutions that work in the Chicago region. In addition, the NWPA utilizes the work of partners – such as Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, Illinois State Water Survey, Metropolitan Planning Council, and U.S. Geological Survey – to connect members with critical information and resources.

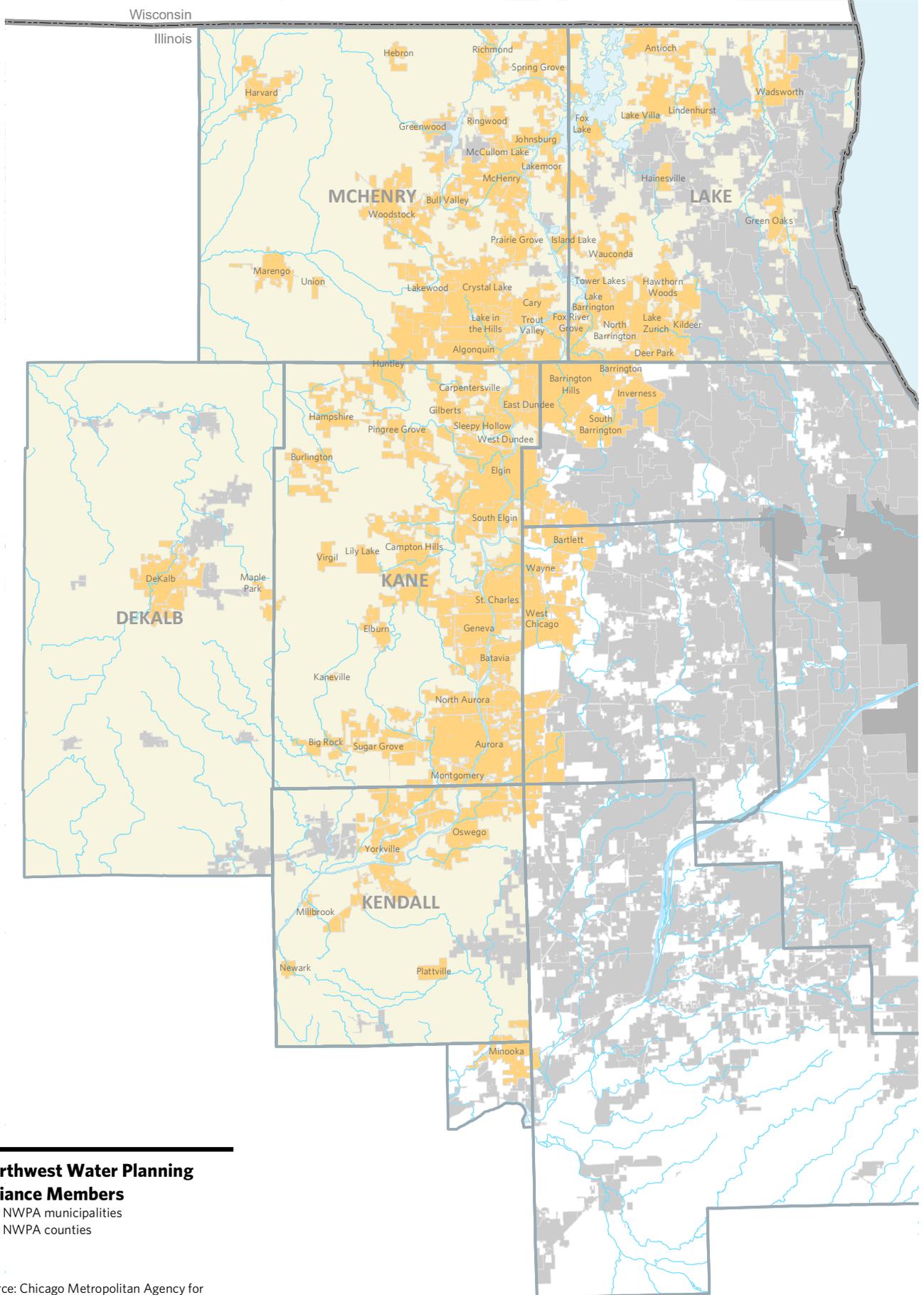
As the organization looks ahead to the next five years, this strategic plan builds on the successes of the past and identifies new opportunities to collaboratively plan to ensure a sustainable water supply. We present this strategic plan to communicate where we are heading and invite you to join us in this important work.

Sincerely,

**David Kaptain**

NWPA, Executive Committee Chairman  
City of Elgin, Mayor

# Northwest Water Planning Alliance Members



## Northwest Water Planning Alliance Members

- NWP municipalities
- NWP counties

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

# Mission, vision, and goals

The Northwest Water Planning Alliance created its first strategic plan in 2014, recognizing that it would need regular updates. Starting in 2019, the NWPA started the process to update the strategic plan using the executive committee and technical advisory committee meetings, as well as a concurrent online member survey, to discuss strategies and set priorities.

This strategic plan reaffirms the original mission statement and vision for the NWPA. NWPA leadership focused on reviewing the goals and strategies to ensure they reflect recent accomplishments, align with the core strengths of the organization and its members, and recognize and support critical partnerships. In addition, the goals and strategies were streamlined to ensure a clear message to existing and future participants in NWPA work.

## Mission Statement

The Northwest Water Planning Alliance, formed by intergovernmental agreement, seeks to collaboratively plan for and steward our shared river and groundwater resources to ensure a sustainable water supply for the people, economy, environment, and future generations.

## Vision

The Northwest Water Planning Alliance area will have dependable supplies of water for generations to come.

## Goals

- A. Develop and promote sustainable water policies and practices
- B. Inform decisionmakers and the public on NWPA issues and best practices
- C. Improve the scientific understanding of NWPA water supplies
- D. Build organizational capacity to achieve mission

The following tables of activities identify priority objectives and strategies for achieving each of the four goals.

**The 2020-2024 strategic plan reflects current opportunities to collaboratively plan for and steward our shared water supplies.**

**Peter G. Wallers**  
**Chair, NWPA Technical Advisory Committee**

# Develop and promote sustainable water policies and practices

## Goal A: Develop and promote sustainable water policies and practices

| Objectives   | Activities  | Timeline  |
|--|---|-----------|
| A.1 Advance sensible salting practices               | <p>Create a Regional Sensible Salting Best Management Practice manual for Parking Lots and Sidewalks, develop sensible training and certification program for snow and ice control operators, promote adoption of local policies requiring certified operators, and advance state legislation to incentivize property owners to hire certified operators in partnership with the Salt Smart Collaborative and The Conservation Foundation.</p> <p>Develop outreach materials to promote the use of the manual and the overall initiative.</p>                             | 0-2 years |
| A.2 Promote outdoor water conservation strategies    | <p>Design and build outreach campaign to increase adoption of NWPA's lawn watering ordinance.</p> <p>Learn from member experiences implementing NWPA's lawn watering ordinance and explore potential updates.</p> <p>Explore additional strategies to reduce outdoor water use.</p>   | 0-2 years |
| A.3 Develop sustainable withdrawal targets by source | <p>Work with scientific community to develop sustainable yield values for each water source. Engage NWPA members to explore different strategies to ensure that projected water demand works within sustainable yield values, including recognition of how climate change (drought, flooding) could affect supply and demand. Develop performance and/or reduction targets for each source, develop an education and outreach plan to assist members in reaching performance/reduction targets, and regularly report water withdrawal data to provide status updates.</p> | 2-5 years |

# Inform decisionmakers and public on NWPA issues and best practices

## Goal B: Inform decisionmakers and public on NWPA issues and best practices

| Objectives  | Activities  | Timeline |
|---|---|----------|
| B.1 Provide a forum for members to learn about the latest research, best practices, tools, and other resources      | <p>Use Technical Advisory Committee and Executive Committee meetings to provide information on a variety of subject areas and work on best practice development.</p> <p>Collaborate with Illinois State Water Survey, Illinois State Geological Survey, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Geological Survey, and other scientific organizations to share information about resource conditions.</p> <p>Collaborate with member utilities and other organizations (e.g. American Water Works Association, Alliance for Water Efficiency, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, Metropolitan Planning Council, National Groundwater Association, WaterSense) to showcase best practices and available resources, such as guidance on water conservation strategies, rate setting, water loss auditing, pollution prevention strategies, etc.</p> <p>Use newsletters, social media, and website to share information with a broader audience, including links to research, best practices, and other resources.</p> | Ongoing  |
| B.2 Provide members with resources to communicate with decisionmakers and the public on NWPA issues and priorities  | <p>Expand the conversation by equipping members with resources to communicate the NWPA message to a larger audience. Resources could include crafting talking points, developing model presentations for members, web and social media resources, and others.</p> <p>Create a member packet for newly elected Council of Government leaders, municipal officials, and new utility directors to introduce them to NWPA.</p> <p>Provide an annual report which highlights accomplishments, successes, and current and future work.</p>  | Ongoing  |
| B.3 Engage county and village boards, city councils, Council of Governments, state representatives, and the public. | <p>Issue policy statements by the Executive Committee on key topic areas to provide guidance and generate attention on best practices.</p> <p>Regularly consult with Council of Government directors to discuss emerging issues, priorities, communication strategies, and available resources.</p> <p>Encourage op-eds on specific topic areas.</p> <p>Meet regularly with state representatives to discuss issues and priorities.</p>   | Ongoing  |
| B.4 Engage partner organizations regarding collaboration on shared interests and issues.                            | <p>Partner with other regional groups, like the Fox River Ecosystem Partnership and Fox River Study Group, partners, like Metropolitan Planning Council, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, and academic institutions on joint initiatives, research, and event and educational opportunities.</p>   | Ongoing  |

# Improve the scientific understanding of NWPAs water supplies

## Goal C: Improve the scientific understanding of NWPAs water supplies

| Objectives   | Activities   | Timeline  |
|--|--|-----------|
| C.1 Showcase latest research and available resources utilizing partner agencies and organizations  | <p>Share research findings and other resources from agency partners and organizations, including Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Illinois State Water Survey, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, Metropolitan Planning Council, U.S. Geological Survey, among others.</p> <p>Utilize Technical Advisory Committee and Executive Committee meetings as well as the newsletter, website, and social media to share information.</p> | Ongoing   |
| C.2 Encourage exchange of data and information between scientific agencies, public utilities, and private commercial and industrial well operators | <p>In addition to annual withdrawal reporting, encourage communities and private well operators to share additional withdrawal and quality information with Illinois State Water Survey to promote a better understanding of groundwater systems.</p> <p>Encourage the expansion network of monitoring wells for both quantity and quality in the NWPAs region.</p> <p>Work with Illinois Water Inventory Program to summarize annual water use in the NWPAs region.</p>   | 0-2 years |
| C.3 Support Illinois State Water Survey work to maintain and advance the regional groundwater flow model and Illinois Water Inventory Program      | <p>Educate decisionmakers on the value of Illinois State Water Survey work and how it provides needed information for NWPAs members.</p> <p>Encourage counties to conduct and/or update special studies with Illinois State Water Survey to improve resource management.</p>   | Ongoing   |
| C.4 Support research in critical areas   | Encourage partners and seek grant opportunities to fund critical research topics.  | 0-2 years |

# Build organizational capacity

## Goal D: Build organizational capacity

| Objectives | Activities  | Timeline  |
|------------|---|-----------|
| D.1        | <p>Maintain Illinois Department of Natural Resources funding and pursue additional funding opportunities</p> <p>Illinois Department of Natural Resources funding has been critical to the organization as it works to achieve its goals. Continued support helps to maintain outreach and educational activities.</p> <p>Continue to foster support for future Illinois Department of Natural Resources funding for Illinois State Water Survey and NWPA among decisionmakers.</p> <p>Seek additional funding to support specific initiatives or research projects.</p> | Ongoing   |
| D.2        | <p>Increase Technical Advisory Committee meeting attendance</p> <p>Explore strategies to engage more members in the regular meetings of the organization. Ideas include continued programming of pertinent speakers, increased outreach about meetings, and offering continuing education credits.</p>  | 0-2 years |
| D.3        | <p>Develop a set of NWPA outreach materials and resources</p> <p>Produce regular newsletters for members.</p> <p>Update and maintain website to provide a clearinghouse of resources and information.</p> <p>Develop full list of existing educational and outreach resources and identify gaps and/or potential updates.</p>   | Ongoing   |



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