



Shared Waters, Shared Future

Northeastern Illinois Regional Water
Supply Sustainability Workshops

Workshop logistics

- Today's workshop will be recorded.
- Closed captioning is enabled.
- We will be using the chat and raise hand features to hear from you throughout the workshop.
- We will be using a live polling tool called Mentimeter.
- Following today, we will share the slides with you and post the recording and materials to the **Shared Waters, Shared Future** website: cmap.is/water-workshops

Collaborating with water utilities and local governments

February 18, 2026



**Shared Waters,
Shared Future**
Northeastern Illinois Regional Water
Supply Sustainability Workshops



Shared Waters, Shared Future

Northeastern Illinois Regional Water
Supply Sustainability Workshops

Partners



The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is our region's comprehensive planning organization. For decades, CMAP has conducted water supply planning to advance efforts that promote sustainable use of our water supplies.



Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant (IISG) is a federal-university partnership (NOAA, U of I, Purdue) focusing on research, education, and outreach for 104 miles of southern Lake Michigan shorelines.



Funding acknowledgment: *Shared Waters, Shared Future* is funded by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Office of Water Resources. We appreciate Wei Han, P.E., Ph.D., Water Supply Program Manager, and the department's commitment to water supply planning.

Using the chat, please share:

- Your name
and organization
- Why you are
attending today's
workshop
- What you hope to
gain by attending



Workshop series goal

Educate and empower northeastern Illinois communities to conserve water, align policies, and strengthen infrastructure and planning for a sustainable water supply.



Workshop series



Collaborating with water utilities and local governments (February 18)



Creating a water sustainability plan (April 23)



Addressing utility climate and drought preparedness (June 3)



Modernizing Illinois' well impact review process (September 10)



Understanding water governance and management in Illinois (November 12)



**Shared Waters,
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Supply Sustainability Workshops

The change we'd like to see

01

Coordinate policy, planning, and conservation.

02

Advance collective water budgeting.

03

Strengthen stakeholder coordination.

04

Secure state leadership, funding, and legislative support.

05

Expand interconnection & mutual aid while preserving local control.

06

Leverage and strengthen existing regional platforms.

07

Develop shared infrastructure investment models



**Shared Waters,
Shared Future**

Northeastern Illinois Regional Water
Supply Sustainability Workshops

Themes

Collaboration improves efficiency and strengthens regional planning and governance. (*Connect & Coordinate*)

Sharing resources reduces costs and improves conservation outcomes. (*Save & Share*)

Coordination supports aligned policies and long-term water reliability. (*Plan & Prepare*)



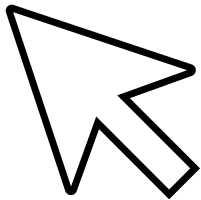
Agenda

- Collaboration 101: What are the options?
- 10-minute break
- Building regional solutions
- Applying collaboration models to regional scenarios:
facilitated exercise
- Wrap-up and what's next

Mentimeter: Which best describes your primary role?

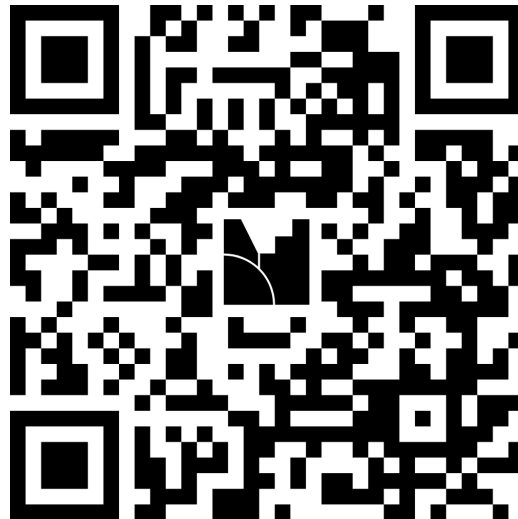
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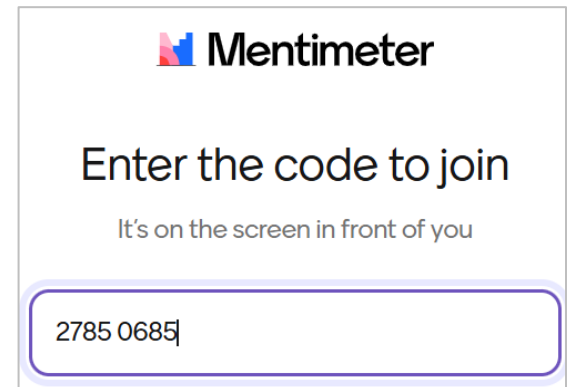
or

Scan the QR
code



or

Join at menti.com
code 3855 2902



Collaboration 101

Speakers



Justin Root

Senior Rural Development Specialist
Great Lakes Community
Action Partnership



Bud Mason

Special Programs Coordinator
Great Lakes Community
Action Partnership



Rural
Community
Assistance
Partnership



Collaboration 101

Today's speakers

 Rural Community Assistance Partnership

Great Lakes Community
Action Partnership / RCAP
Program

Bud Mason, Special Programs
Coordinator

Justin Root, Senior Rural
Development Specialist





Improve public health, surface water protection, environmental compliance, economic readiness and quality of life in small communities and rural areas.

- Access funding for water and sewer projects
- Improve the capabilities of water and sewer systems
- Promote shared services and regionalization projects





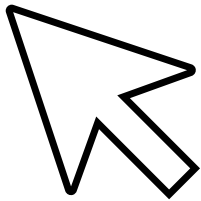
Great Lakes RCAP thanks its funders for their financial support.

US Department of Health & Human Services

Mentimeter: What's your biggest water challenge right now?

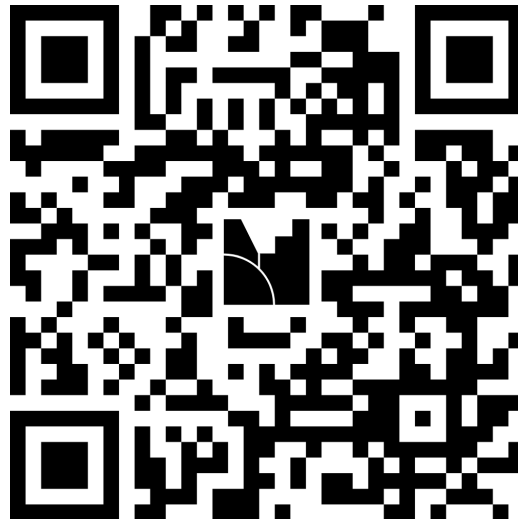
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 Mentimeter

Enter the code to join

It's on the screen in front of you

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REGIONALISM JEOPARDY

CHALLENGES

AMP

SDWA

CIP

WLCP

CWA

WSRAR

RRA

ERP

LSLIR

PARTNERS

MPC

BUC

GLCAP

GPWC

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RCAP

IWRC

DELTA

SSMMA

GSGP

NWPA

SSWWA

GLC

EPA IL

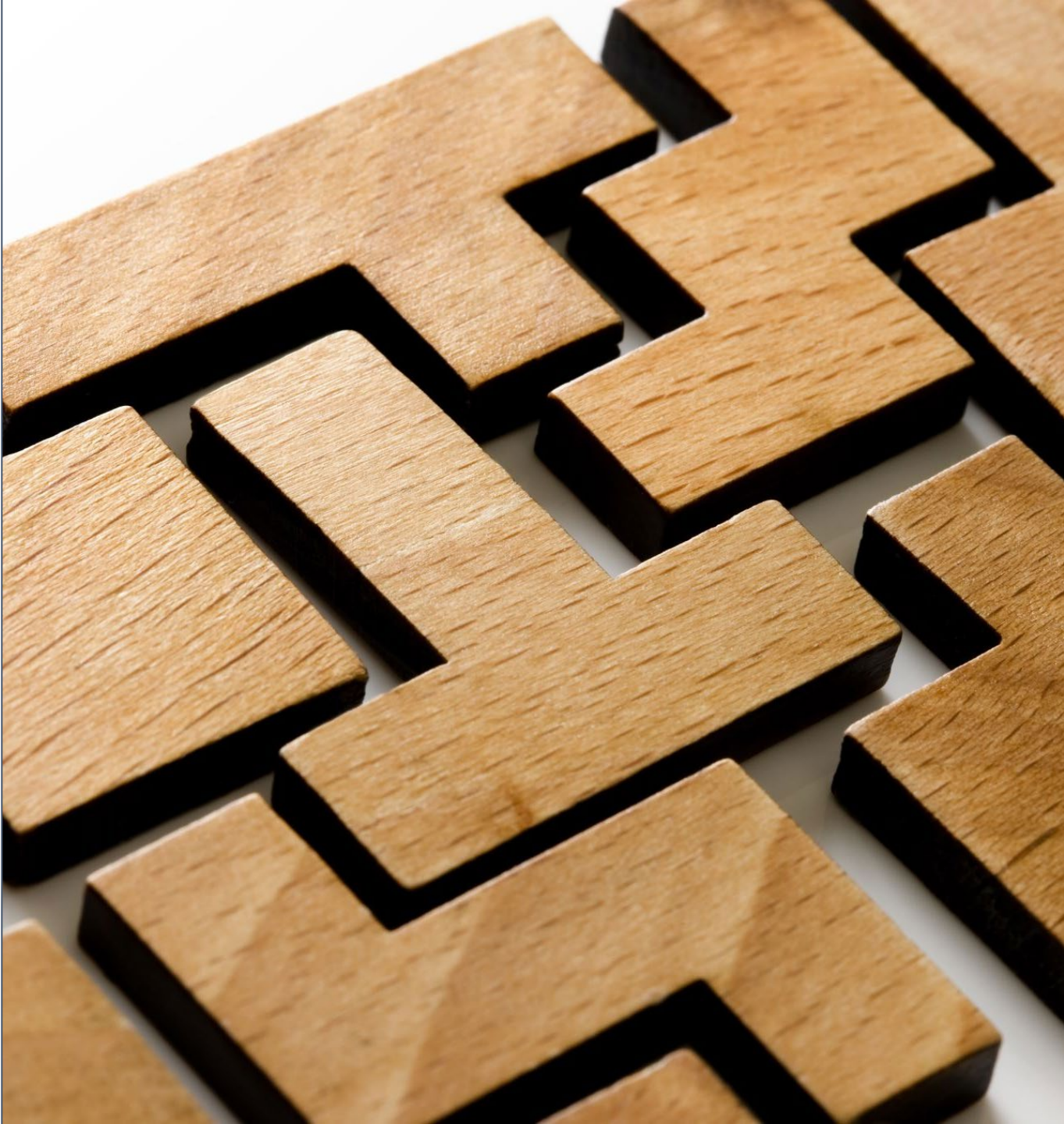
USDA/RD

EFCN

PRI

EPA R5

Introduction to collaboration





Collaboration is...

Cooperation between two or more utilities or communities for mutual benefit



Working regionally

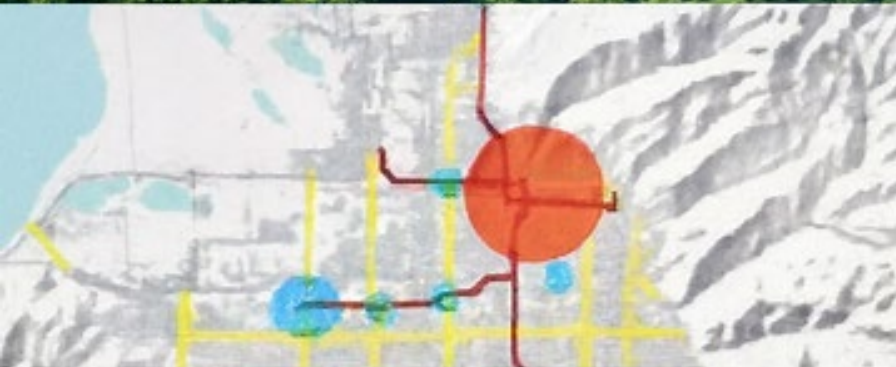
- Productive partnerships are important to the success of communities and economic development
- Partnerships between and among communities can:
 - Leverage resources
 - Build local economies and infrastructure
 - Achieve meaningful change (and clean drinking water!)



But why collaboration?

- To ensure economies of scale, affordability, long-term sustainability, and resilience
- You do not have to “go it alone” – strength in numbers
- Look at all options, see what is feasible, and make an informed choice





Benefits of working regionally

- Larger economies of scale equal decreased costs
- Leverage greater capacity and reliability
- Higher levels of service
- Access to expertise and resources
- Ability to address trans-boundary issues



Collaboration drivers

Cost considerations and creating economies of scale

Regulatory pressures/compliance

Climate change/disaster/resiliency (including adaptation to drought etc.)

Funding eligibility/larger regional projects

Efficiency and redundancy

Improved drinking water quality and level of service



Collaboration benefits and barriers

Benefits:

- Cost savings and improved operations
- Access to funding sources
- Improved ability to work with regulators or meet regulatory requirements
- Advances in economic development
- “Big picture” planning efforts

Barriers:

- Local politics and interests
- Lack of trust
- Questions of local control/governance
- Fear of the unknown
- Financial Challenges: funding projects, distributing the costs and benefits of a project, and at times, *diseconomics of scale*

But these barriers can be overcome!



Benefits of expanding partnerships

For the water system



Economies of scale



Long-term savings



Improved customer service



Planning for future operations



Increased TFM capacity



Public health protection



Improved emergency response

For the state program



Improved compliance



Potential reduction in number of regulated water systems



Resource savings



Public health protection

For the customer



Improved water quality



Increased reliability of supply



Public health protection



Increased customer confidence



Increased community and economic development





Informal cooperation

- NO Contractual Obligation
- Informal cooperation creates opportunities to:
 - Increase economies of scale and technical expertise
 - Creates communication pathways
 - Allows drinking water systems to maintain local control and flexibility of service
- Can you relate to some of the challenges?





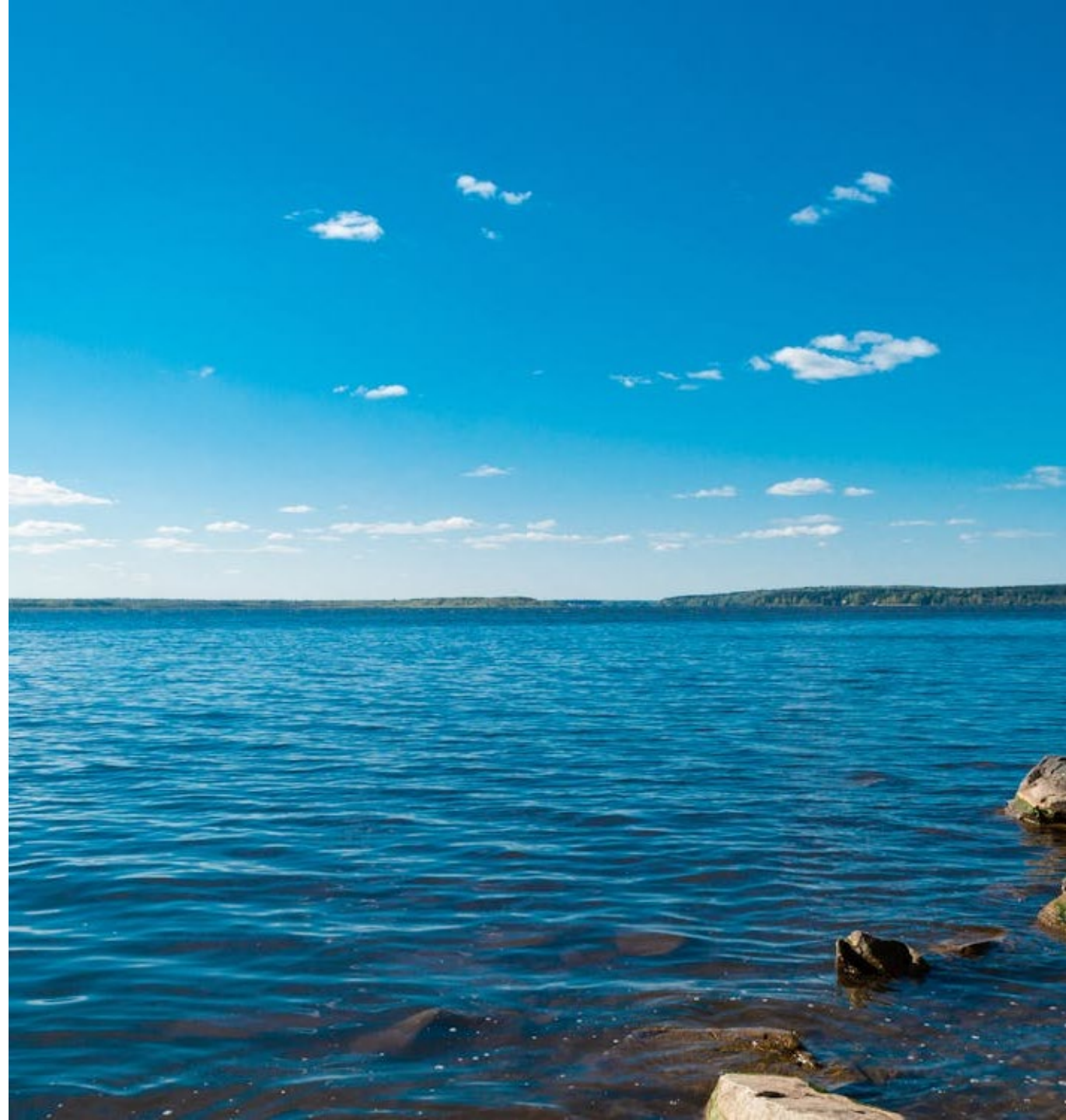
Contractual assistance

- Signed contractual obligation
- Contractual assistance creates opportunities to:
 - Have a stable, written agreement
 - Improve technical, managerial, and financial capacity
 - Maintain control of a system
 - Price effective solutions to solve a wide range of challenges
- Can you relate to some of the challenges?



Joint power agency

- Also known as regionalization
- Systems merge to create new entity
- Joint power agency creates opportunities to:
 - Share management, operators, and source water
 - Increase access to funding options
 - Provide checks and balances
- Can you relate to some of the challenges?



Ownership transfer

- Also known as a water system buyout
- Most complete type of partnership
- Ownership transfer creates opportunities to:
 - Solve severe problems
 - Relieve system of responsibilities
 - Resolve technical, managerial, and financial capacity issues
- Can you relate to some of the challenges?



EPA resources in Illinois



DWSRF PRIORITIZATION OF CONSOLIDATION PROJECTS

A long-term goal of Illinois' Public Water Supply Loan Program is to encourage the consolidation and regionalization of small PWSs so these systems can take advantage of economies of scale. The Illinois DWSRF Loan Priority Score criteria (35 IAC Part 662.345) states that loan projects can be given 75 priority points if they include the consolidation of two or more community water supplies into a single community water supply. Priority points are also given to applicants who are developing or implementing a source water protection plan or asset management plan.



FUNDING CONSOLIDATION WITH STATE LOAN FUNDS

IEPA operates a One Well Critical Review Principal Forgiveness program that offers principal forgiveness to PWSs that rely on one well for their water supply. The purpose of these loans is for the PWS to obtain a second source of water. Loan applicants must consider at least three alternatives and include a justification of the most feasible source alternative based upon financial considerations, operational requirements, operator qualifications, reliability, and water quality. By requiring systems to provide alternatives and include justification the IEPA believes this will steer applicants towards considering system consolidation.



OPERATOR SHARING AND OPERATOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Rules for the Illinois Operator Certification Program (35 IAC Part 681) outline the duties and obligations of contract operators (35 IAC Part 681.1000) and require that contracts between water systems and operators stipulate how often the operator will be on site. The Illinois Rural Water Association developed a template contract that meets the requirements.



BUILDING TMF CAPACITY

IEPA conducts periodic inspections of all CWS systems to determine if their ongoing programs for monitoring, maintaining the water supply, and providing appropriate information to the water users meets the requirements of the Illinois Pollution Control Board's public water supply regulations and related standards. Field staff visually observe the facility and review on-site documents to evaluate the TMF capacity of existing systems. Prior to conducting a site-visit, a TMF pre-screening survey is sent to the official custodian and responsible operator in charge of each public water supply. The TMF pre-screening survey includes questions about if the PWSs has emergency interconnections and whether the emergency response plan provides alternate sources of water.



EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The Illinois Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network's (ILWARN) mission is to support and promote statewide emergency preparedness, disaster response, and mutual assistance matters for public and private water and wastewater utilities for natural and man-made events. Through the ILWARN web site, a member can request emergency equipment (pumps, generators, chlorinators, evacuators, etc.) and trained personnel (e.g. Treatment plant operators) that they may need in an emergency. The ILWARN program provides its member utilities with a standard omnibus mutual assistance agreement and process for sharing emergency resources among members statewide.

EPA publishes summary pages for each state for six categories:

- Funding mechanisms
- State capacity development or operator certification programs
- Mid-level, county or regional planning
- State drinking water enforcement program
- Legislation or statute
- Emergency planning



EPA resources in Illinois



**EPA WaterTA
Supports
Communities to:**



Identify water challenges



Plan for solutions



Increase community engagement



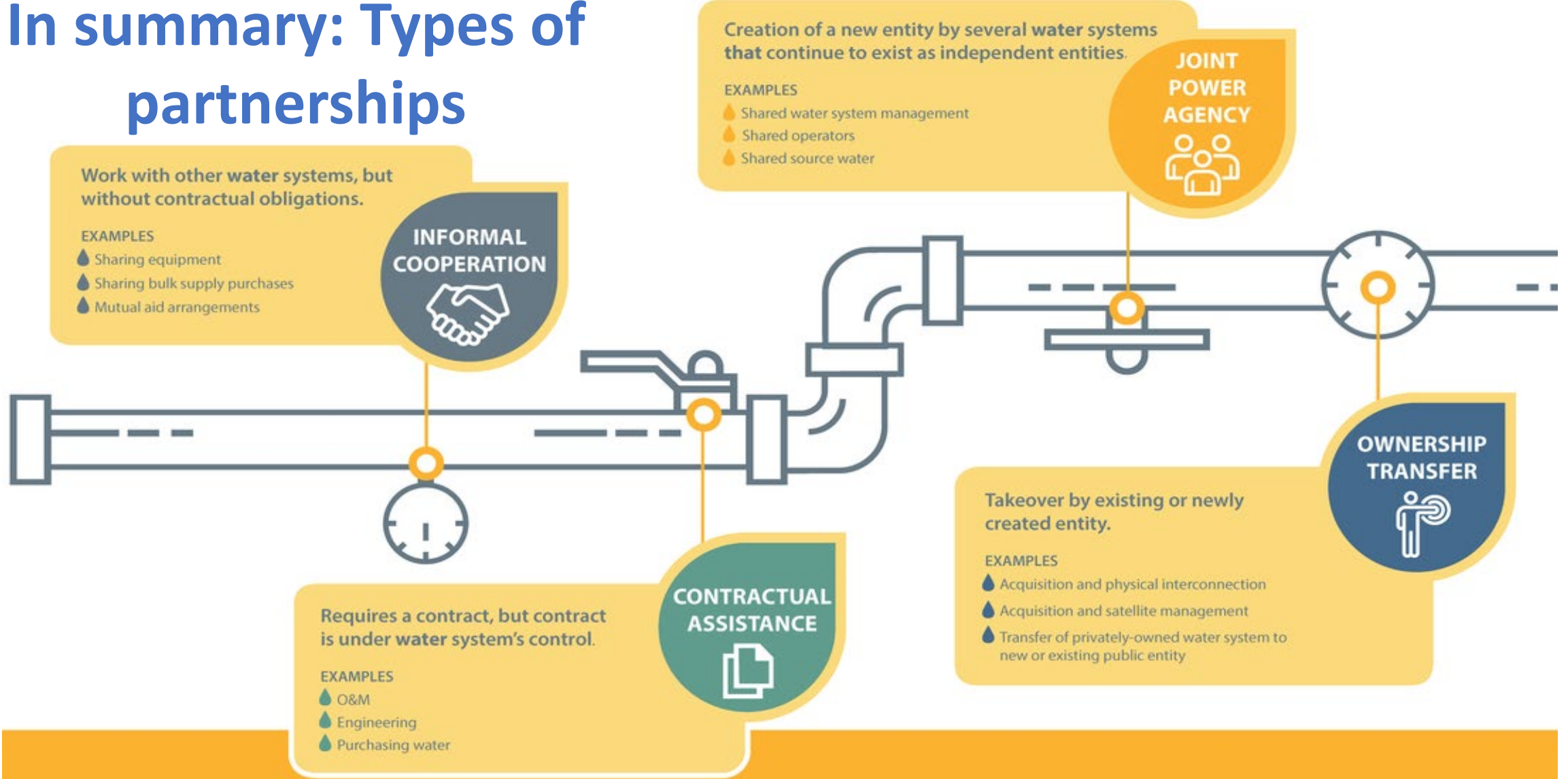
Build technical, financial, managerial capacity



Develop application materials to access water infrastructure funding



In summary: Types of partnerships





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our webpage



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1-800-775-9767

10-minute break

Building regional solutions

Moderator



Danielle Gallet

Founding Principal and Water Strategist, Waterwell

Panelists



Peter Wallers

Northwest Water Planning Alliance
Technical Advisory Committee Chair and
Engineering Enterprises, Inc.



Allison Swisher

Director, City of Joliet Department of
Public Utilities; Program Director,
Grand Prairie Water Commission



David Kohn

Deputy Commissioner, Regional
Partnerships Department of Water
Management City of Chicago

Lightning talks



Peter Wallers

Northwest Water Planning Alliance Technical Advisory Committee Chair
and Engineering Enterprises, Inc.

Northwest Water Planning Alliance (NWPA)

- Collaborative Water Supply Planning Group
- Focus on Groundwater and Inland Surface Water Communities (i.e., Non-Lake Michigan)
- Covers Five Counties and Five Councils of Government Representing 80 Units of Government and 1.8 Million People
- Overseen by 9 Mayors and County Board Chairs
- Supported by a TAC that reports to the Elected Officials
- TAC membership includes Public Works Directors and Staff, Water Professionals, Consultants, Various Agencies and NGOs.
- Voluntary – Non-Profit



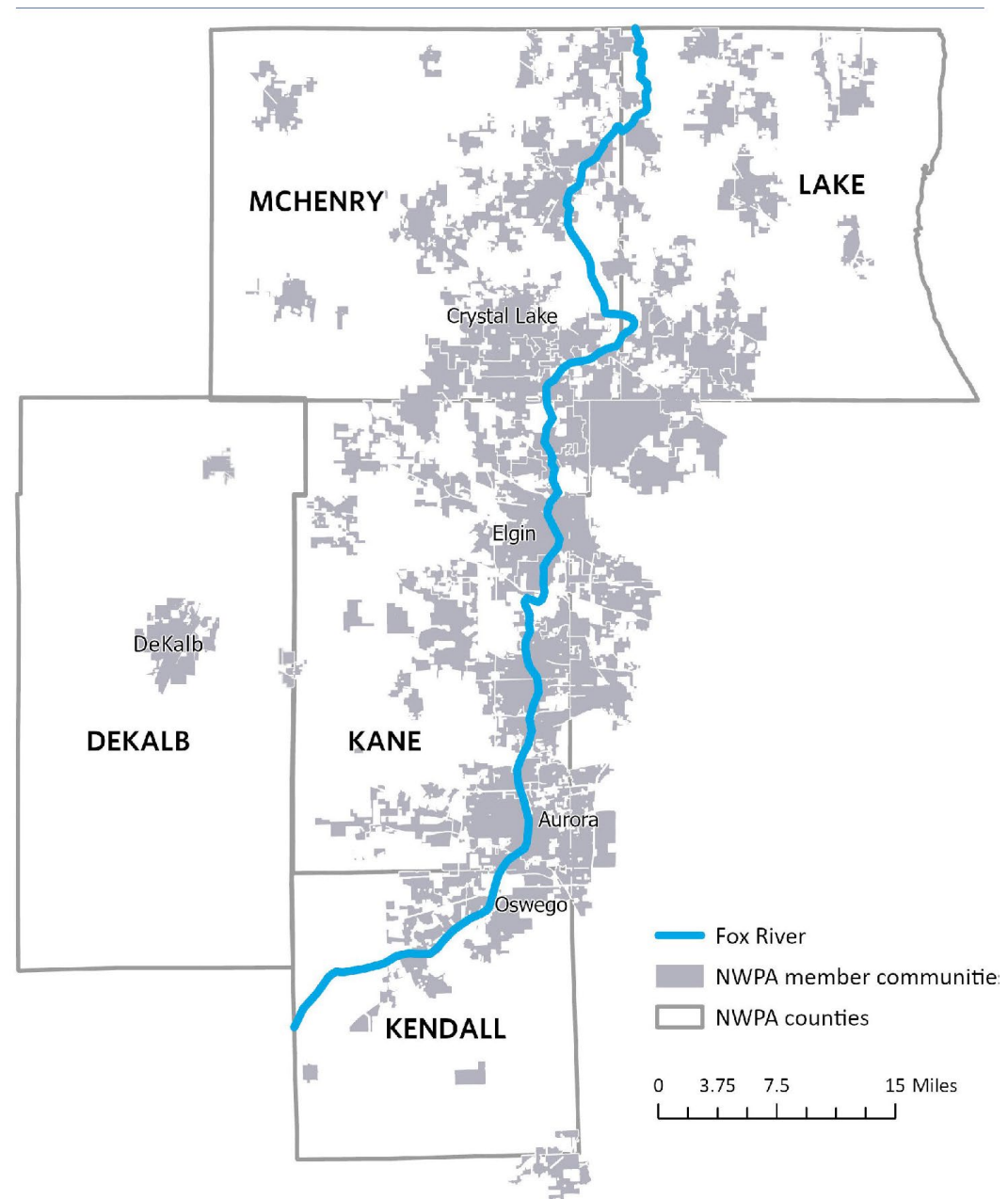
NWPA – partners and collaborators

- Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)
- Illinois State Water Survey (ISWS)
- US Geological Survey (USGS)
- Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant (IISG)
- Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
- Illinois Section of American Water Works Association (ISAWWA)
- Sugar Grove Water Authority
- Local Water Professionals



NWPA region and member communities

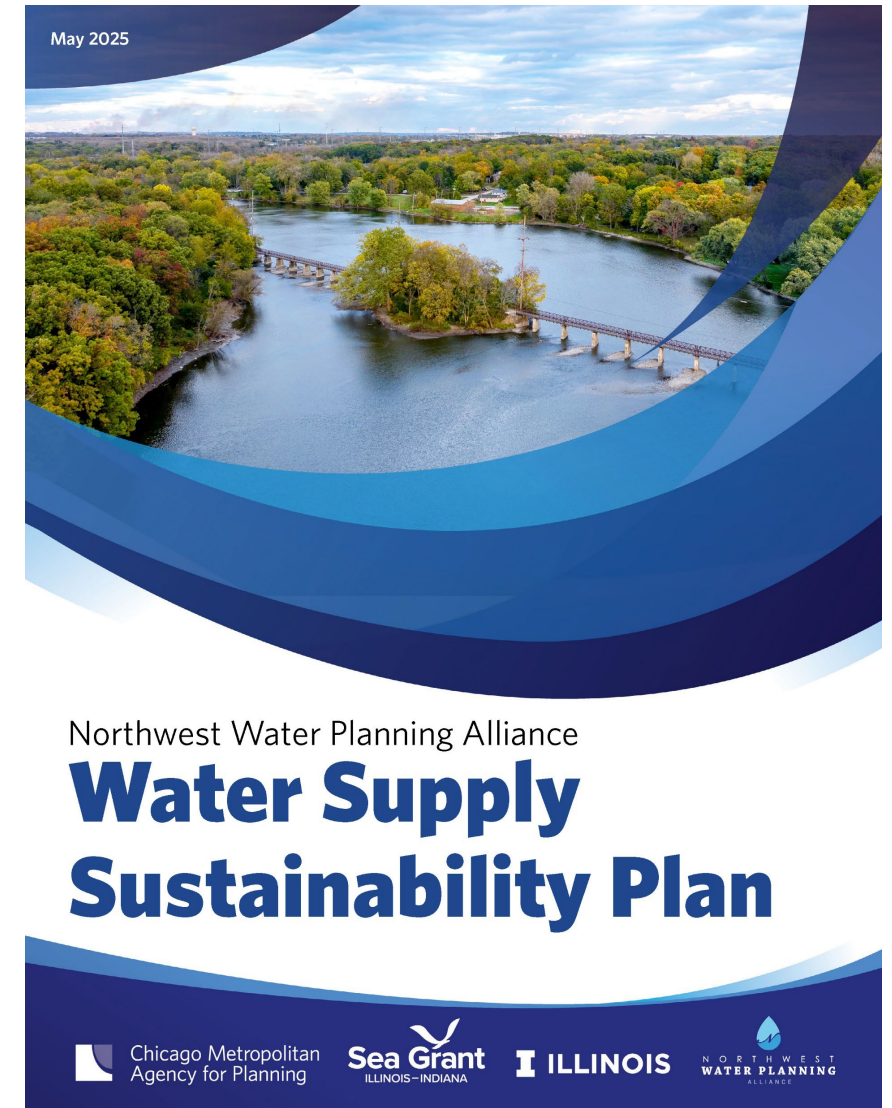
www.NWPA.US



Source: CMAP, 2024.

Water Supply Sustainability Plan

- Assessment
 - Water Supply Sources
 - Water Use and Population
- Analyze
 - Population Projection and Water Use
 - Water Works – Capacity and Condition
 - Water Supply Capacity
- Action
 - Water Conservation
 - New Supplies



Sustainability



Lightning talks



Allison Swisher

Director, City of Joliet Department of Public Utilities
Program Director, Grand Prairie Water Commission

CHANNAHON | CREST HILL | JOLIET | MINOOKA | ROMEOVILLE | SHOREWOOD



GRAND PRAIRIE
WATER COMMISSION

Allison Swisher
Director of Public Utilities, City of Joliet

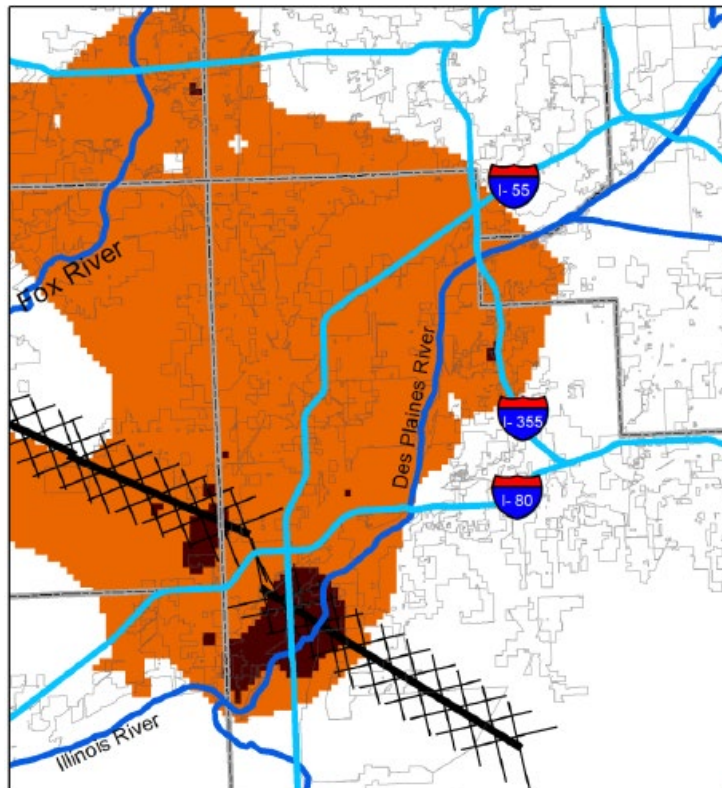
Regional problem

Groundwater sources in the region are in jeopardy:

- **deep sandstone aquifer** is being depleted to the point of inoperability
- shallow aquifer water quality is deteriorating due to **increased chloride levels and presence of PFAS**



GRAND PRAIRIE
WATER COMMISSION



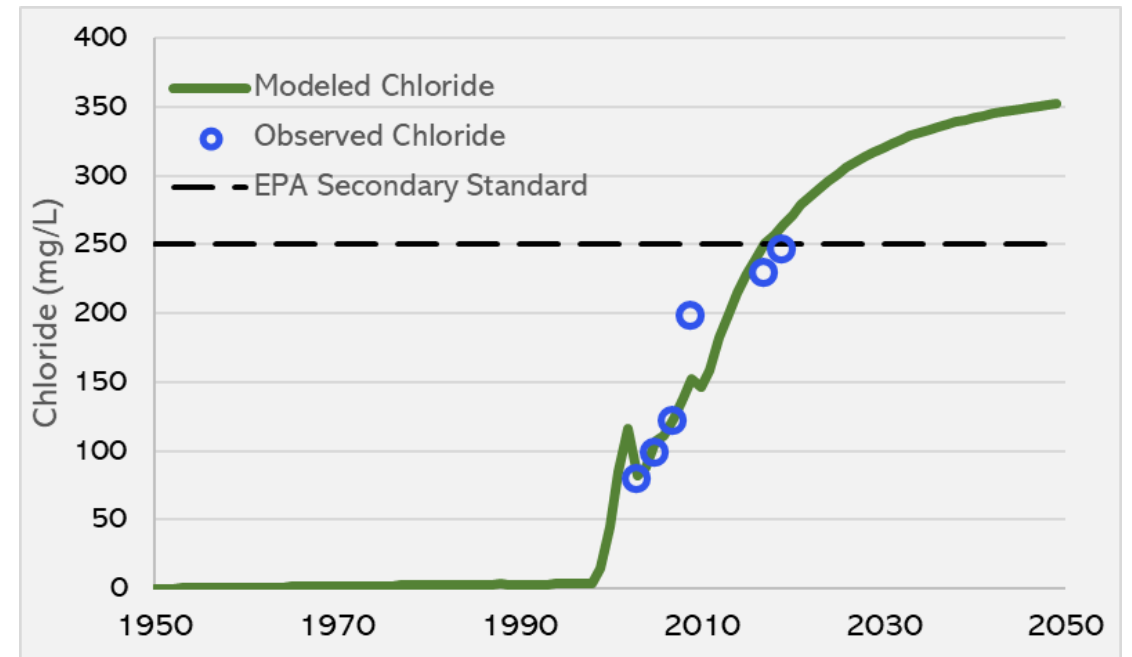
Legend

- Interstates
- Major Rivers
- County Boundary
- Municipal Boundaries
- Sandwich Fault Zone

Risk Zones

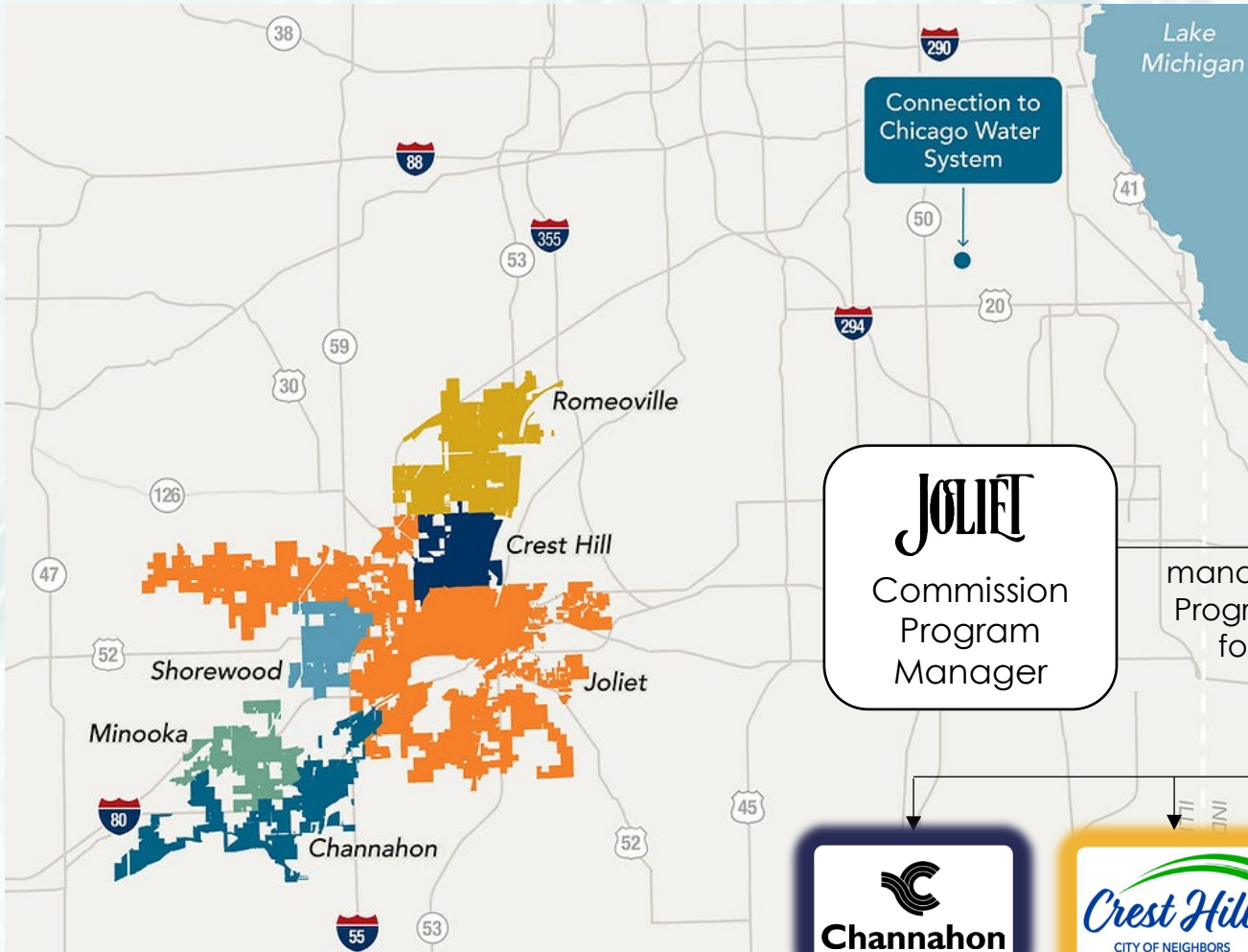
- Risk of well inoperability
- Risk of declining well performance

2050 – Peak Pumping (Joliet off aquifer) (From ISWS)



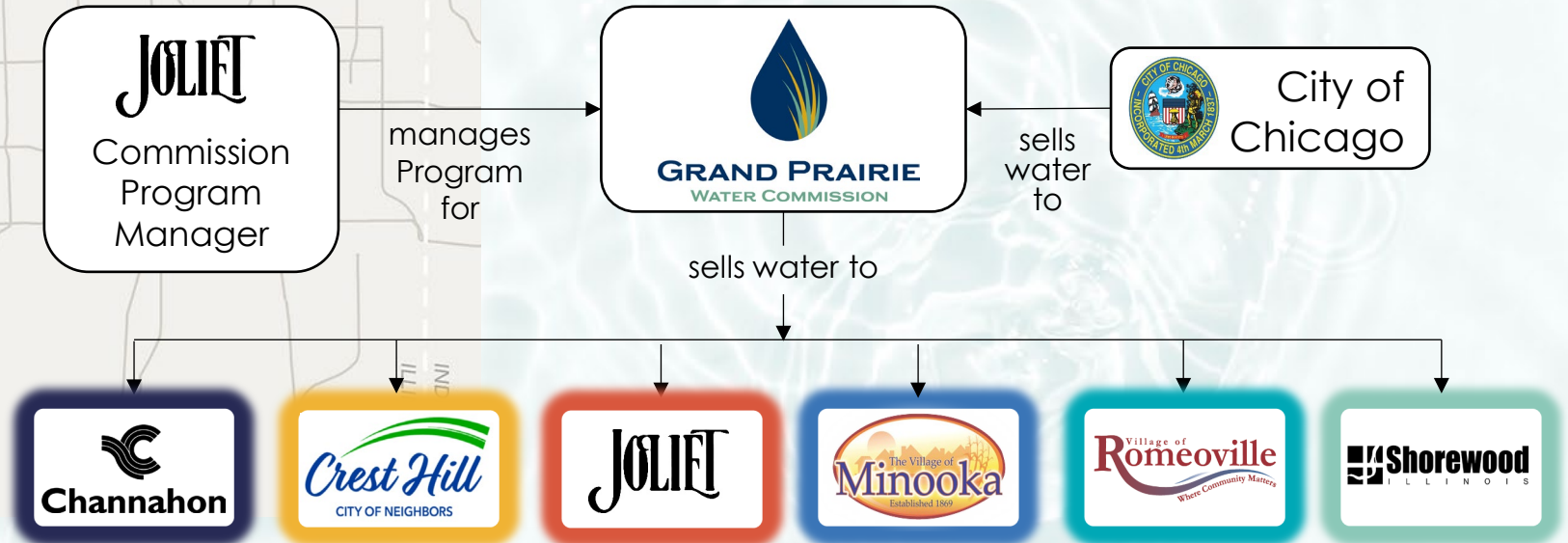
There are observed and modeled increases in chloride levels in regional shallow wells (From ISWS)

Regional solution



Grand Prairie Water Commission

- Established June 2024
- 6 Member Communities
- over 250,000 people



Water Commission formation timeline



2021

- ✓ Approval of Regional Water Commission Act Legislation
- ✓ Reached consensus on Key Principles and prepared Preliminary Agreement

2022

- ✓ Member communities approved Preliminary Agreement Regarding Water Commission Formation
- ✓ Member communities without Lake Michigan Allocations submitted applications to IDNR for Lake Michigan Allocation

2023

- ✓ Member communities continue through Lake Michigan Allocation process
- ✓ GPWC obtains Public Water Supply ID

2024

- ✓ Remaining Member communities obtain Lake Michigan Allocations
- ✓ Submittal of GPWC WIFIA Loan Application
- ✓ Reach consensus on Water Commission Documents
- ✓ Member Communities approve Intergovernmental Agreement to form the Grand Prairie Water Commission
- ✓ **COMMISSION IS FORMED (6/28/24)**

Water Commission benefits



Benefits of a regional water commission:

- **Lower water rates** due to cost sharing and economies of scale
- **Distribution of risk** amongst more entities
- **Support** of state and federal agencies such as IEPA and USEPA as well as state and federal legislators
- Ability to **obtain access for construction in rights-of-way** outside of the limits of the member communities

Collaboration snapshot



- **Type of collaboration:** Joint powers agreement (Intergovernmental Agreement) creating a shared regional Lake Michigan water supply
- **Why it emerged:** Groundwater quality and quantity issues
- **What made it feasible:** Clear governance, defined cost-sharing, strong intergovernmental coordination, and long-term planning
- **Key takeaway:** Regional collaboration provides benefits, but requires trust, time, and clear structure

Lightning talks



David Kohn

Deputy Commissioner, Regional Partnership
Department of Water Management City of Chicago



Water utility & local government collaboration:

**A case study from Chicago's
Department of Water
Management (CDWM)**

David Kohn

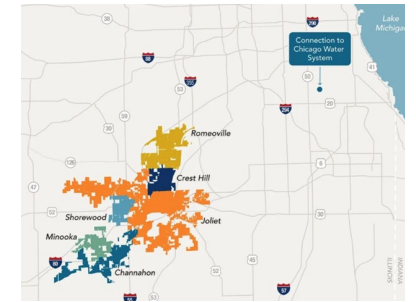
Deputy Commissioner, Regional
Partnerships

Chicago Department of Water
Management

Historic expansion of the Chicago water system

Grand Prairie Water Commission

- Several years ago, Joliet (now Grand Prairie Water Commission) began its search for a new water source due to depletion of its underground aquifers, projected to occur as soon as 2030
- Chicago selected as the supplier in January 2021
- 100-year contract signed; construction began in 2025 with water service starting in 2030
- Largest expansion of Chicago Water System in **40 years**





The challenge:

How To Sustain Relationships with Suburban Water Customers and Enhance Regional, Community Collaboration

Issues:

- *Addressing a competitive and price-sensitive water supply environment*
- *Need for ongoing customer engagement, not just when problems arise*

Chicago's response:

- Usher in a new era of Regional Collaboration with its wholesale partners featuring the **AWWA Cost-of-Service rate methodology** and facilitated by creation of the new **Advisory Council**

AWWA
methodology
rate setting

Cost-of-service rates:


Reflect the true cost of providing water service and the level of service received by each customer; i.e., rate reflects only components that are “used and useful” to provide water to the customer



Used by other large regional water systems such as Detroit, Southern California (LA & SD), Dallas Water, Houston Water, and Milwaukee Water Works



Overall, the AWWA rate will be comparable to the uniform water rate that the City currently charges all regional customers



6
1

Chicago Water Partners Advisory Council (CWPAC)

- Established in 2022 to foster greater regional collaboration, the CWPAC includes representatives of all the City's suburban water customers across NE Illinois and meets quarterly. It provides recommendations to the DWM Commissioner on water policy and operations.
 - As an advisory body to a unit of government, CWPAC is subject to Illinois' Open Meetings Act requirements – **meetings open to public and media**
 - Formal By-Laws adopted; governed by 9-member Exec. Committee
 - **NOT a "Chicago-centric" body** – directed by member communities and water systems.

The Bottom Line:

Transitioning to the AWWA Cost-of-Service

Rate Methodology

+

Establishing the Chicago Water Partners Advisory Council

=

More Engaged

Water System Partners, Greater Community and Regional Collaboration



Thank You!



David Kohn

Deputy Commissioner, Regional Partnerships

Chicago Department of Water Management

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chicago.gov/water



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Thank you!



Danielle Gallet



Peter Wallers



Allison Swisher



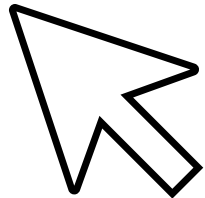
David Kohn

Evaluation check in

Mentimeter: How familiar are you with collaboration models?

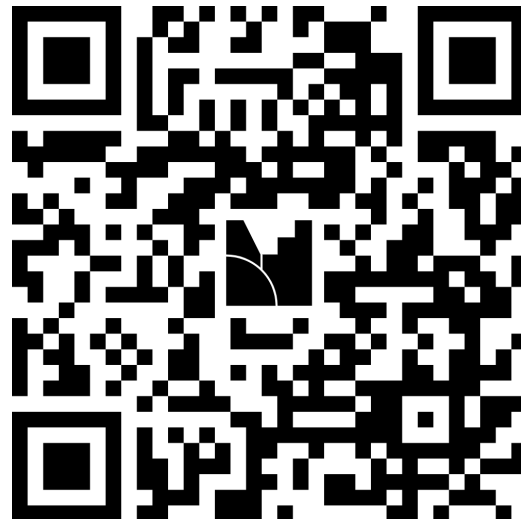
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Thank you!



**Shared Waters,
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Facilitated exercise



Rural
Community
Assistance
Partnership



Facilitated exercise:

Applying collaboration models to regional scenarios

Purpose

You were introduced to different types of collaboration models and heard examples of how organizations in northeastern Illinois are using collaboration to address water supply challenges.



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Purpose

In this exercise, you'll apply those ideas to a realistic regional scenario and work with others to identify:

- An appropriate collaboration approach
- One practical, near-term next step



Instructions

- You will be randomly assigned to a Zoom breakout room with up to **8 participants**.
- Each group will be assigned **one scenario**.
- Open the shared Google Doc for your scenario and go to the tab for your group.
- Please assign a **notetaker** to capture key points from your discussion.
- Focus on **practical, policy-relevant ideas**, rather than reaching consensus or designing a complete solution.



Breakout discussion

Use the discussion questions provided for your scenario to guide the conversation.

Groups may move flexibly, but please aim to address **all four questions**, with particular attention to collaboration approaches and near-term actions.



Report out

Each group will be asked to share **one key insight** from your discussion in response to the following prompt:

What type of collaboration felt most promising for your scenario, and why?

Please plan for a **brief (about 1 minute)** report-out.



Scenario A questions:

- What is the primary water supply challenge reflected in this scenario?
- Beyond current efforts, what additional or strengthened forms of collaboration could realistically help address this challenge?
- What enabling conditions would be required for that collaboration to occur? (e.g., funding mechanisms, staff capacity, technical or data resources, governance authority, institutional relationships)
- What is one near-term, actionable next step that could move this collaboration forward?

Large system with regional dependence

A large metropolitan water system provides water to its own residents and supplies water to multiple neighboring communities through long-standing wholesale arrangements. These neighboring communities vary in size, technical capacity, infrastructure condition, and financial resources.

Recent lead service line inventory reporting and cost estimates have increased public attention on replacement timelines and affordability. At the same time, communities are moving forward with major capital investments at different paces and with varying cost and equity impacts for ratepayers. While informal coordination among regional partners exists, there is no consistent framework for aligning planning, conservation, or capital investment priorities across the system.



Multi-community system with shared infrastructure

Several neighboring communities jointly rely on shared water infrastructure operated through a regional or joint entity. This arrangement has historically provided reliability and economies of scale. However, communities now face new pressures related to capital reinvestment, affordability, and differing local priorities. Some communities are prepared to move forward with major investments, while others are constrained by financial or staffing limitations. Questions are emerging about how to coordinate decision-making, share costs equitably, and plan for long-term system sustainability as conditions and community needs evolve.

Scenario B questions:

- What is the primary water supply challenge reflected in this scenario?
- Beyond current efforts, what additional or strengthened forms of collaboration could realistically help address this challenge?
- What enabling conditions would be required for that collaboration to occur? (e.g., funding mechanisms, staff capacity, technical or data resources, governance authority, institutional relationships)
- What is one near-term, actionable next step that could move this collaboration forward?



Scenario C questions:

- What is the primary water supply challenge reflected in this scenario?
- Beyond current efforts, what additional or strengthened forms of collaboration could realistically help address this challenge?
- What enabling conditions would be required for that collaboration to occur? (e.g., funding mechanisms, staff capacity, technical or data resources, governance authority, institutional relationships)
- What is one near-term, actionable next step that could move this collaboration forward?



Regional planning without binding authority

Multiple communities within a sub-region rely on the same groundwater source. Recent data indicate declining water levels and increasing treatment needs and costs. Some systems have the technical capacity to study alternatives, while others do not. Local land use decisions continue to increase demand, yet water supply planning remains largely uncoordinated across jurisdictions. A voluntary regional planning group focused on water supply sustainability has developed shared studies, planning documents, and recommendations related to demand management, conservation, and long-term supply risks. While there is broad agreement on the challenges, participation levels and implementation vary widely across communities. There is no formal mechanism to require coordination or align investments, and communities are interested in moving from planning to action but are uncertain how to do so.

Capacity gaps in smaller or under-resourced communities

Several smaller communities face ongoing challenges related to staffing, technical expertise, regulatory compliance, and public communication. While technical assistance and support may be available through regional organizations or service providers, limited staff time and baseline capacity remain significant barriers to participation, even when assistance is offered at low or no cost. At the same time, neighboring communities and regional organizations are advancing related planning, conservation, or infrastructure initiatives, but connections between these efforts are limited. Communities express interest in collaboration but are uncertain where to start or how to engage without becoming overwhelmed.

Scenario D questions:

- What is the primary water supply challenge reflected in this scenario?
- Beyond current efforts, what additional or strengthened forms of collaboration could realistically help address this challenge?
- What enabling conditions would be required for that collaboration to occur? (e.g., funding mechanisms, staff capacity, technical or data resources, governance authority, institutional relationships)
- What is one near-term, actionable next step that could move this collaboration forward?





Consider...

- The common themes that emerged across scenarios.
- How different collaboration approaches inform future policy discussions.
- The conditions needed to support collaboration.



Themes

Collaboration improves efficiency and strengthens regional planning and governance. (*Connect & Coordinate*)

Sharing resources reduces costs and improves conservation outcomes. (*Save & Share*)

Coordination supports aligned policies and long-term water reliability. (*Plan & Prepare*)



Wrap up & what's next

Thank you for joining us!

- Today's workshop was recorded.
- Once processing is complete, the recording and materials will be posted on the **Shared Waters, Shared Future** website:
cmap.is/water-workshops

Continue the conversation



Creating a water sustainability plan (April 23)



Addressing utility climate and drought preparedness (June 3)



Modernizing Illinois' well impact review process (September 10)



Understanding water governance and management in Illinois (November 12)

Thank you



Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning

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