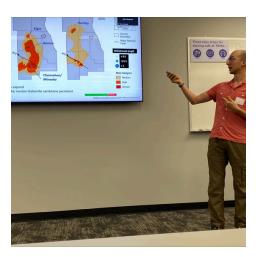# Will County Water Summit Recap:
Exploring Sustainable Solutions for Our Groundwater Supply

The Will County Water Summit brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to address one of the most pressing issues facing our region: the status of our groundwater supply. The objective of the Summit was to inform participants about the challenges we face and to propose measures that could help recharge our aquifers and ensure a sustainable water future for Will County.

A Growing Challenge: Joliet's Water Supply

For decades, the Joliet region has been aware that its current water source, the shallow groundwater aquifer, will not meet the demands of our growing population by 2030. In response to this looming crisis, the Cities of Joliet and Chicago signed a landmark agreement in 2023 to connect Joliet to the Lake Michigan water supply. While this solution offers a long-term alternative, it comes with a significant price tag, with some projections suggesting it could double the cost of water for customers.

Exploring Alternative Solutions: Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR)

The Will County Environmental Network (WCEN) believes there is another viable solution: a Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) system. These systems are already in operation around the globe, providing proven methods for recharging groundwater supplies and offering a potentially more cost-effective solution for our region.

Opening Remarks by Will County Executive, Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant: Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant set the tone for the Summit, emphasizing the urgent need to find solutions to our depleting water resources and supporting efforts to explore all available options.

Joe Johnson of Stantec: Joe Johnson, who leads the multi-firm team responsible for designing and managing the delivery of the water transmission system for Joliet, provided an in-depth overview of the Chicago-to-Joliet Water Pipeline project, clarifying what this major infrastructure project entails and what it does not.

Devin Mannix, Hydrogeologist: Devin Mannix offered a detailed analysis of the current status of Will County's groundwater supply. As a PhD candidate and a hydrogeologist with the Illinois State Water Survey, Devin also proposed a study to assess the feasibility of recharging our shallow aquifer, a critical step in addressing our water scarcity.

Dr. William Alley, National Ground Water Association: Dr. William Alley, the Director of Science and Technology at the National Ground Water Association, discussed the various forms of Managed Aquifer Recharge systems and their potential applications in Will County.

Ben Zhang, PhD and PE at Burns & McDonnell: Ben Zhang shared innovative solutions to our water scarcity challenges, highlighting cutting-edge technologies and approaches that could be part of the solution.

Alex Hoxsie, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: Alex Hoxsie provided success stories from around the country where Managed Aquifer Recharge systems have been implemented. He also discussed how the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers could offer technical services to support our efforts.

Alecia Morales, Joliet Township Supervisor: Alecia Morales reaffirmed Joliet Township's commitment to finding a sustainable solution for our water supply challenges, announcing that the Township has allocated $140,000 in their budget toward this effort.

Looking Ahead: Join the Stakeholder Group

The Summit concluded with an invitation to all organizations interested in continuing this critical conversation and working together to implement sustainable water management strategies. A stakeholder group is being formed to explore these issues further and to develop actionable plans for Will County.
If your organization is interested in joining this group, please complete the online **Interest Form** to express your interest.

Thank you to all who attended the Will County Water Summit. Your commitment to finding solutions for our water future is essential, and we look forward to working together to safeguard this vital resource for generations to come.