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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28, 2018  
VOL. 122 NO. 24 www.presspubs.com \$1.00

## Vadnais Heights' residential water use above the brim

BY SARA MARIE MOORE  
VADNAIS HEIGHTS EDITOR

### 2016 RESIDENTIAL GALLONS OF WATER USED PER PERSON PER DAY

Vadnais Heights	83
Court order	75
Stillwater	72
Mahtomedi	70
Lake Elmo	70
Lino Lakes	68
Hugo	66
White Bear Lake	63
White Bear Township	59-63
Oakdale	61
North St. Paul	55

Source: DNR

VADNAIS HEIGHTS — Of 10 northeast metro municipalities included in a court order to reduce residential water use, Vadnais Heights had the highest per capita use in 2016 — 83 gallons per day, 11 gallons higher than the second-highest municipality.

One amendment to the city's DNR water appropriation permit, which the City Council unanimously appealed at a meeting March 20, calls for a plan to reduce residential water use to 75 gallons per day per person. All nine other municipalities affected by District Judge Margaret Marrinan's order in the wake of the White Bear Lake level lawsuit are already below that threshold, according to an analysis done by the DNR.

"The city is exploring that difference as it does stand out," stated City Administrator Kevin Watson in an email after the meeting. "Hopefully, it's an anomaly." He said the city doesn't currently have data on gallon use per person per day for prior years.

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## WATER USE: Meters don't show residents how they use water

FROM PAGE 1A

Vadnais Heights has water rates that increase based on usage but has lower rates than some surrounding cities, said Watson during a workshop meeting earlier in the evening March 20.

City Engineer Mark Graham said he is not sure why the city's water use is so high; his best guess is perhaps the city has more girls who take long showers. Water meters don't differentiate between types of use, he noted.

The second amendment to the permit prohibits residential irrigation when the level of White Bear Lake is below 924 feet.

Graham said he doesn't know how many homes in Vadnais Heights have auto irrigation systems and whether or not the irrigation ban would get the city down to 75 gallons per person per day. "It's hard to say," he noted. The 83 gallons is an average, year-round number. The city already has an odd/even days residential irrigation ban.

The order also requires the city to have a plan to convert to surface water use by August.

The U.S. Geological Survey study on the wells that may be impacting White Bear Lake was performed by Vadnais Heights resident Perry Jones and he said the city's wells were not impacting the lake, Graham noted.

"Our impact is extremely minimal if there is some," said Mayor Bob Fletcher. He also added that it would be the right thing to do for the city to be off groundwater in the next several decades.

"We can't be blind to the fact that the judge is saying the natural resources of this community in terms of

the lake are important as well," Fletcher said. Councilman Greg Urban said perhaps the city should have pushed more for augmentation. One

**"The more we think about this, I think we should just send a bunch of river water to these rich people on White Bear Lake ..."**

Greg Urban  
Vadnais Heights City Councilman

solution to the low level of White Bear Lake that has been proposed is constructing a pipeline from Vadnais Lake to White Bear Lake; water from the Mississippi River would then flow into the lake through the chain of lakes from the west.

"The more we think about this, I think we should just send a bunch of river water to these rich people on White Bear Lake and say 'Here, there is your water you want, right straight out of the

Mississippi River,'" he said.

The final amendment required by court order is to send an annual report on collaboration efforts with other municipalities to reduce per capita water use. Graham said the city already works with other municipalities on reducing water use.

City staff recommended the City Council appeal the restrictions. "These changes are extremely costly and difficult to complete," Watson and Graham stated in a memo.

The Vadnais Heights City Council sent a letter to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requesting a hearing on the amendments. All other municipalities affected by water use restrictions have indicated they also plan to appeal the order, according to a memo from city staff. Cities affected include those with municipal wells within 5 miles of White Bear Lake.

A resident at the workshop said he was glad the Vadnais Heights City Council was appealing the order because he didn't think residents in Vadnais Heights should be affected by people on White Bear Lake who don't want to put extensions on their docks.