



CITY OF NOVI CITY COUNCIL
MARCH 9, 2026

SUBJECT: Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) incident response update to the March 7, 2026, Novi water service disruption and ongoing restoration efforts - Suzanne Coffey, CEO

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT: City Manager

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In preparation and support of City Council for Ms. Coffey's time at the March 9th meeting, please see the following background on the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) and its relationship with all its municipal partners:

The **Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA)** was created as a central component of Detroit's 2014 bankruptcy exit plan to regionalize the city's massive water system. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the City of Detroit, the State of Michigan, and Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne counties, establishing the framework for the regional authority. The GLWA was officially incorporated under Michigan Public Act 233 of 1955.

To achieve this, GLWA signed a 40-year lease for control over the DWSD treatment plants, major water transmission mains, sewage interceptors and related facilities for \$50 million per year. The funds go directly toward capital improvement for the City of Detroit retail water system and to repair Detroit's aging water infrastructure.

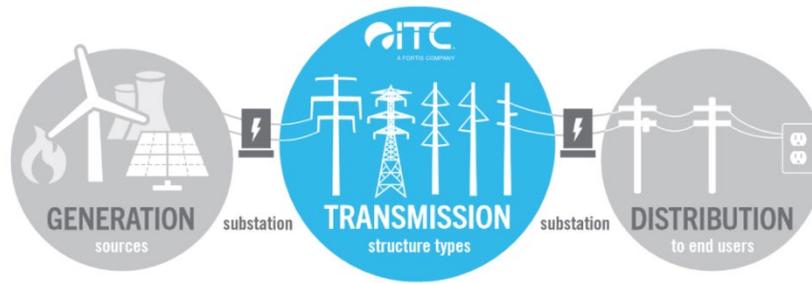
GLWA began operations as an independent regional water and wastewater authority, separate from the Detroit Water and Sewer Department (DWSD) on January 1, 2016.

GLWA operates five water treatment facilities that draw water from Lake Huron and the Great Lakes tributary, the Detroit River, which services nearly 40% of the State of Michigan. They operate/maintain 816 miles of water mains (pipes) and treat 1.72 billion gallons of water each day.

GLWA does have a six member Board of Directors made up of three appointees from Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties (one each), one from the State of Michigan, and two members from the City of Detroit.

The City of Novi is one of 127 municipalities in eight counties that are GLWA customers. The City receives water from GLWA's large transmission lines and then distributes it to residents/businesses within our borders. There is no alternative to being a GLWA member or another source of treated water the City can tap into to supply residents. Like ITC, headquartered in Novi, who owns and maintains the transmission lines that supply energy to local providers like DTE and Consumers to service their customers:

The Three Components in Electric Power Transmission



The same goes for GLWA and their customers (the City of Novi):



Roles and Responsibilities

- Operates regional water and wastewater system for communities in eight southeast Michigan counties, including the city of Detroit
- Bills member municipalities for water and wastewater treatment services
- Creates a collaborative, regionally-focused water and wastewater system that ensures all communities served have a voice in the direction of the utility
- Utilizes a partnership approach to operating the system based on mutual trust, collaboration, respect and open and honest communication



Responsibility

- Operates the city of Detroit's local water and wastewater systems
- Bills residential and commercial accounts within the city of Detroit limits
- Provides compassionate customer service to all customers
- Offers payment plans and coordinates water affordability programs to eligible customers

- Collaborates with 88 member partners to ensure water quality for local customers in 112 communities (nearly 3.8M served)
- Collaborates with 19 member partners to ensure safe and sanitary wastewater treatment services for local customers in 79 communities (nearly 2.8M served)



Customers

- More than 230,000 residential, commercial, and industrial accounts within the city of Detroit

- Leases infrastructure from the city of Detroit
- Operates and maintains five water treatment facilities, one water resource recovery facility, as well as associated facilities and infrastructure
- Provides funding for and implements capital improvements to the regional water and wastewater systems
- Utilizes its double AA credit rating to secure favorable financing/lower interest rates on existing debt to allow for increase ability to use cash on hand to fund future capital improvements



How It Works

- Retains ownership of the city of Detroit's water and wastewater system (2,700 miles of water main and 3,000 miles of sewer collection piping)
- Leases infrastructure and water and wastewater treatment facilities to GLWA for \$50M a year over 40 years
- Utilizes the \$50M annual lease payment to replace aging city of Detroit water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure, starting with a \$500 million, five-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) launched in June 2019

Roles and Responsibilities

- Publishes a five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in partnership with member partners which outlines intended infrastructure projects in the water and wastewater systems and is evaluated annually
- Adopts an annual budget which includes capital, operating and maintenance expenses and limits yearly increase to no more than 4% (absent extraordinary circumstances)

- Leverages regional resources for member partner benefit, including maximizing use of existing public investments, coordinating asset upgrades and repairs with projects underway in member communities
- Determines capital improvements to meet service-level requirements and ensure long-term sustainability of the system
- Commits a dedicated half-percent of revenues to WRAP, a sustainable assistance plan that provides financial assistance, conservation education, minor plumbing repairs (including for bathroom and kitchen fixtures that pre-date the 1986 lead-free plumbing code change)
- Provides for enhanced financial transparency

- Suzanne Coffey, CEO; appointed and approved by GLWA Board of Directors in August 2021
- Oversight by a six-member board comprised of one representative each from Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties, two representatives from the city of Detroit, and one appointed by the Michigan governor to represent member communities outside of the tri-county



How It Works Cont.

- Replace full lead service lines, mostly residential, in Detroit as part of the CIP and per new state law to replace them within 40 years



Advantages

- Expansion of enhanced Customer Assistance Programs administered through third-party, qualified service providers
- Focus on Detroit and improve operational practices have led to vastly improved customer outreach, responsive and preventative maintenance of the systems, and innovation in program implementation
- Reduces the amount of stormwater entering the wastewater system through a Green Infrastructure Program with 17 projects that manage 61 million gallons annually



Leadership

- Gary Brown, Director of DWSD, appointed by the Mayor of Detroit and approved by DWSD Board of Water Commissioners in January 2016
- The DWSD Board of Water Commissioners is comprised of seven board members that are Detroit residents appointed by the Mayor of Detroit



2017 GLWA “ONE WATER” PARTNERSHIP - 09/28/17

<p><i>City of Allen Park</i></p> <p><i>Village of Almont</i></p> <p><i>Ash Township</i></p> <p><i>City of Belleville</i></p> <p><i>Berlin Charter Township</i></p> <p><i>Brownstown Township</i></p> <p><i>Bruce Township</i></p> <p><i>Burtchville Township</i></p> <p><i>Canton Township</i></p> <p><i>City of Center Line</i></p> <p><i>Chesterfield Township</i></p> <p><i>Clinton Township</i></p> <p><i>Commerce Township</i></p> <p><i>City of Dearborn</i></p> <p><i>City of Dearborn Heights</i></p>	<p align="center">1. PURPOSE</p> <p>1.1 The Great Lakes Water Authority (“GLWA”) and its undersigned members, as defined below, enter into this commitment for the purpose of continuing, strengthening and improving a long-term partnership based on the critical success factors of mutual trust, collaboration, respect, and open and honest communication for the benefit of the public and all signatories to this commitment.</p> <p align="center">2. MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>2.1 The members of this partnership include GLWA, its staff and Board of Directors, and all GLWA wholesale customers (“Customers”), the City of Detroit (“Detroit”), the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (“MDEQ”), the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (“SEMCOG”), and consultants representing any of the foregoing members (collectively, “Members”).</p> <p align="center">3. MISSION STATEMENT</p> <p>3.1 To collaboratively ensure a One Water system approach to our regional water and wastewater system that will be economically, socially and environmentally responsible and sustainable.</p> <p align="center">4. MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES</p> <p>4.1 Members are responsible for providing information generated by and through this partnership to community and organizational stakeholders and clients, as appropriate.</p> <p>4.2 Members are responsible for making contributions to work groups and the timely completion of assignments that they have agreed to accept.</p> <p>Members will abide by and actively support the following rules of collaboration:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Show mutual respect for each Members’ point of view. b. Balance the needs of your individual community or entity with the interests of the system as a whole. c. Work toward consensus on each issue. “Consensus” means an opinion held by all or most of the partnership and/or work group, which is supported by a show of hands. 	<p><i>City of Detroit</i></p> <p><i>City of Eastpointe</i></p> <p><i>City of Ecorse</i></p> <p><i>City of Farmington</i></p> <p><i>City of Farmington Hills</i></p> <p><i>City of Ferndale</i></p> <p><i>City of Flat Rock</i></p> <p><i>City of Fraser</i></p> <p><i>City of Garden City</i></p> <p><i>City of Gibraltar</i></p> <p><i>GLWA</i></p> <p><i>Grosse Ile Township</i></p> <p><i>City of Grosse Pointe</i></p> <p><i>City of Grosse Pointe Farms</i></p> <p><i>City of Grosse Pointe Park</i></p> <p><i>Village of Grosse Pointe Shores</i></p>
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2017 GLWA “ONE WATER” PARTNERSHIP - 09/28/17

<p><i>City of Grosse Pointe Woods</i></p> <p><i>City of Hamtramck</i></p> <p><i>City of Harper Woods</i></p> <p><i>Harrison Township</i></p> <p><i>City of Hazel Park</i></p> <p><i>City of Highland Park</i></p> <p><i>Huron Township</i></p> <p><i>City of Imlay</i></p> <p><i>Imlay Township</i></p> <p><i>City of Inkster</i></p> <p><i>City of Keego Harbor</i></p> <p><i>City of Lapeer</i></p> <p><i>Lenox Township</i></p> <p><i>City of Lincoln Park</i></p> <p><i>City of Livonia</i></p> <p><i>Macomb Township</i></p>	<p>d. Enter each meeting with a willingness to acknowledge your own personal bias to encourage and maintain a collaborative working environment.</p> <p>e. Respect individual concerns and needs as each Member is unique.</p> <p>f. Be proactive and take initiative in raising issues and providing recommendations prior to, during, and after meetings.</p> <p align="center">5. CUSTOMER OUTREACH</p> <p>5.1 To facilitate the effective conduct of the partnership, GLWA will maintain and manage a Customer Outreach program. This program will include a contracted third-party facilitator responsible for ensuring and sustaining the rules of collaboration within the partnership and furthering the transparent exchange of financial, programmatic, and technical information between GLWA and its Members. The third-party facilitator will have access to all Members of the partnership including GLWA leadership, staff and its Board of Directors, as appropriate.</p> <p align="center">6. PARTNERSHIP ORGANIZATION AND PROCESS</p> <p>6.1 The One Water Partnership (formally known as the water Technical Advisory Committee and wastewater Steering Committee) will conduct facilitated quarterly meetings.</p> <p>6.2 The One Water Partnership co-chairs shall be selected or elected in accordance with the partnership bylaws.</p> <p>6.3 The co-chairs will develop the agenda for each quarterly meeting, in collaboration with the GLWA customer outreach program, GLWA executive staff, and the third-party facilitator.</p> <p>6.4 Each work group will communicate progress updates, recommendations and requests to GLWA leadership, staff and its Board of Directors to enable communication between all Members.</p> <p>6.5 Members will identify and organize work groups to further the mission of the partnership. The work groups existing as of September 28, 2017, are identified in the attached Exhibit A.</p>	<p><i>City of Madison Heights</i></p> <p><i>Mayfield Township</i></p> <p><i>MDEQ</i></p> <p><i>MDOT</i></p> <p><i>City of Melvindale</i></p> <p><i>Village of New Haven</i></p> <p><i>NOCWA</i></p> <p><i>City of Northville</i></p> <p><i>Northville Township</i></p> <p><i>City of Novi</i></p> <p><i>City of Oak Park</i></p> <p><i>Oakland County</i></p> <p><i>Oakland-Macomb Interceptor District</i></p> <p><i>City of Plymouth</i></p> <p><i>Plymouth Township</i></p>
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7. PARTNERSHIP GOALS		
<p><i>Redford Township</i></p> <p><i>City of River Rouge</i></p> <p><i>City of Riverview</i></p> <p><i>City of Rockwood</i></p> <p><i>City of Romeo</i></p> <p><i>City of Romulus</i></p> <p><i>City of Roseville</i></p> <p><i>Royal Oak Township</i></p> <p><i>SEMCOG</i></p> <p><i>Shelby Township</i></p> <p><i>SOCWA</i></p> <p><i>Southgate</i></p> <p><i>Village of South Rockwood</i></p> <p><i>City of St. Clair Shores</i></p> <p><i>City of Sterling Heights</i></p> <p><i>Sumpter Township</i></p> <p><i>City of Sylvan Lake</i></p>	<p>7.1 To protect the public health, safety and welfare of the public served by the regional system.</p> <p>7.2 To participate in the optimization of critical GLWA business processes such as asset management, capital improvement project identification and planning, continuing education, procurement, public relations, strategic planning, and training.</p> <p>7.3 To identify and further business and technical innovations with the potential to make effective and efficient contributions to the partnership such as cooperative purchasing, joint economic development, regional training, and piloting new technologies.</p> <p>7.4 To actively participate in the development and roll out of water and wastewater charges to minimize controversy.</p> <p>7.5 To expand partnership participation to those Members who do not regularly engage in partnership activities.</p> <p>7.6 To identify and cultivate utility leaders of the future.</p> <p>7.7 To develop a multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency approach to infrastructure renewal and development.</p>	<p><i>City of Taylor</i></p> <p><i>City of Trenton</i></p> <p><i>City of Troy</i></p> <p><i>City of Utica</i></p> <p><i>Van Buren Township</i></p> <p><i>City of Walled Lake</i></p> <p><i>City of Warren</i></p> <p><i>Washington Township</i></p> <p><i>City of Wayne</i></p> <p><i>Wayne County</i></p> <p><i>West Bloomfield Township</i></p> <p><i>City of Westland</i></p> <p><i>City of Wixom</i></p> <p><i>City of Woodhaven</i></p> <p><i>YCUA</i></p>
8. WORK GROUP GOALS		
	<p>8.1 Work group goals shall be established annually in consultation with co-chairs and the GLWA Customer Outreach program.</p> <p>8.2 Goal progress will be tracked by the third-party facilitator and progress updates will be provided to the Members at quarterly partnership meetings.</p>	
9. PARTNERSHIP EVALUATION PROCESS		
	<p>9.1 Co-chairs shall, in consultation with each work group, prepare a scorecard to evaluate GLWA performance and present it to GLWA leadership at prescribed intervals.</p> <p>9.2 The Customer Outreach program shall provide written status reports to co-chairs, GLWA leadership and its Board of Directors on quarterly basis, to include an evaluation of the partnership activities.</p>	