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June 2021

Splash!



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Chicago Harbor - Photo by Lisa Harris

Greetings from the New LWV Lake Michigan Region President



Greetings!

For those of you receiving our newsletter for the first time, LWV Lake Michigan Region (LWVLMR) is an Inter-League Organization, comprised of the four surrounding member state leagues in the Lake Michigan watershed (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin), and approximately 48 local leagues in those states. The Great Lakes are freshwater oceans, and vital to the health, recreation, and economies of the states that lie within the watershed.

During this pandemic year, our robust Lake Michigan Environmental Education and Advocacy work has continued, as you can read in the articles below. Our 2020 Annual Conference, *"Lake Michigan: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly,"* held by necessity via Zoom, extended our reach to many more participants than we've been able to

accommodate in the past. So, while we look forward to seeing one another again in person, we can expect to utilize more hybrid models of in-person and virtual gatherings in our future. If you couldn't be with us for the conference, or if you just want to have another look, you can view each session on our website at www.lwvlmr.org.

Among our many advocacy achievements, we have successfully advocated for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and environmental justice efforts to fund clean water infrastructure and prohibit utility shut-offs during the pandemic. You can read more about our 2020-21 [Initiatives](#) here.

Remember, our new fiscal year begins July 1, 2021. We look forward to receiving your renewal in support of our initiatives protecting precious Lake Michigan resources. Also, please **save the dates, October 15 & 16**, for our 2021 Annual Meeting and Educational Conference.

In closing, it is with great sadness, we report the passing of our dear friend, colleague, and fellow Board member Jeanette Neagu. Jeanette was a passionate advocate for Lake Michigan, and devoted LWV Lake Michigan Region Board and Speakers Bureau member. LWVLMR has lost a good friend, and her presence at our meetings and on behalf of our organization will also be missed. This issue of *SPLASH!* is dedicated to Jeanette. In it, you will find a remembrance of Jeanette and a link to her obituary. Our condolences go out to Jeanette's family and her legion of friends and fellow advocates.

Jeanette serves as an inspiration to us all, as we move forward during these challenging times to educate and advocate for this watershed that is so vital to the Lake Michigan Region and beyond.

In League,

Joy

Elizabeth Joy Guscott-Mueller
President
League of Women Voters Lake Michigan Region

Reflections on the 2020 Annual Conference

The LWV Lake Michigan Region 2020 Annual Conference, "*Lake Michigan: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*," featured presentations on the emerging issue of coal ash management, "Smart Sewer Systems," (using Artificial Intelligence to better manage storm water), and environmental justice advocacy efforts. [Click HERE to view the sessions on our website.](#)

Following the conference, many LWV members were inspired, went home, and began to pay further attention to the issues of coal-burning power plants in their own watersheds. At this point, they began to become better informed about coal ash issues throughout their state.

In Indiana, for example, a state representative and a state senator who'd attended our conference, helped craft legislation to address the problems with coal ash. They, along with others, consulted effective laws from Illinois and other states to help design some excellent legislation. During the process, they realized their entire state was impacted by coal ash – from coal mine and coal-burning plant closures, unemployment, and groundwater pollution steaming from unlined coal ash storage facilities. Issues of high unemployment they felt could be remediated by building facilities to process coal ash into useful products for industry and roads. They realized that in order to pass legislation that was originally "for" the Lake Michigan communities, they needed to network with the entire state. Since they are both Democrats, they knew they would have to reach across the aisle to their Republican colleagues to make any progress.



Likewise, the supporters of responsible coal ash legislation began to reach out to fellow LWVLMR members across the state through their LWVIN Natural Resources Advocacy Group. As they realized what they had in common and networked with other members in similar organizations (Hoosier Environmental Council, Sierra Club, Just Transitions NW Indiana), individual LWV members were able to suggest names of their own representatives who might be willing to supporting such legislation.

Of course, the first year that great legislation is introduced doesn't mean that it will even make it out of committee – which, unfortunately, is what happened in the 2021 Indiana legislative session. However, think about your own state – how many years have pipeline issues, state environmental regulations, Asian carp, and so forth been on your legislative menu? This is a very strong beginning for Indiana. League members are learning more about networking and collaborating with each other and with other organizations to come together to eventually craft and pass good environmental laws, and to encourage everyone – from private citizens to industry – to become educated and more responsible about big issues like these.

Advocacy Corner

LWV Lake Michigan Region

This Spring, LWVLMR joined a series of H.O.W. (Healing our Waters) letters that were sent to five congressional subcommittees related to 2021 fiscal year funding, supporting \$375 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The Advocacy team reached out to the four Lake Michigan state leagues, and all were able to sign on. The GLRI has been an area of advocacy since 2010 and grassroots support and advocacy prevented proposed budget cuts to the program by the prior Administration. You can read about the positive impact GLRI funding has had on Wisconsin Areas of Concern (AOCs) in a Special Report published in the latest edition of [*Wisconsin Natural Resources*](#).



Please direct any advocacy inquiries to Advocacy Chair, David G. Mueller, dmueller@guscottmuellerlaw.com, with a copy to President, Elizabeth Joy Guscott-Mueller, lwvlakemichigan@gmail.com.

Illinois

The Coal Ash Pollution Prevention Act previously passed the Illinois Legislature and rulemaking is now proceeding. Last fall, the Illinois Pollution Control Board held a hearing on proposed coal ash waste management regulations and then solicited comments through the winter and spring. The Pollution Control Board also held a hearing in the fall on Ethylene Oxide (EtO) regulation.

Illinois is not as far along in addressing the emerging contaminants known as PFAS as some other states; IEPA is still evaluating and establishing surface and groundwater standards but appears to be waiting on the federal government to adopt MCLS for PFAS in drinking water.

Local environmental groups are advocating for lead surface line replacement. In 2017, the state adopted a weak assessment law for schools, municipalities, and daycare operators, but there is no substantial program to pay to replace the aging infrastructure. Bills (IL HB3739 and IL SB1168) were introduced in the Illinois House and Senate in February to fund the replacement of lead service lines.

Indiana

Indiana passed a bill, which was widely opposed, to remove protections from Class 1 and some Class 2 wetlands. Builder associations drove this bill. Indiana also passed a bill allowing the state to create its own rules for coal ash disposal independent of US EPA. There is a bill regarding solar energy and right-to-farm bill.

Michigan

Michigan had an overwhelming volunteer response to observe certification of the 2020 elections which has grown into a reinvigorated Observer Corp movement across the state to monitor public meetings for emerging issues so that the local leagues can be poised for advocacy action.

In addition, local leagues have been active in opposition to the continued operation of Line 5 and supportive of the November 13 decision by the Michigan Governor and Attorney General to terminate and permanently revoke the easement that has allowed Enbridge Energy to operate Line 5 in the Straits of Mackinac. Enbridge has appealed and will continue to operate until a court ruling. There is a proposal for Enbridge to build a tunnel to hold line 5, but this needs approval. The Michigan League is commenting on considering the climate impacts and not providing funds for infrastructure for fossil fuels.

The Michigan Leagues are also supporting new funding for state parks. They have advocated on issues around PFAS, pollution of water from nutrient overloading from fertilizer overuse and malfunctioning septic systems, lead in water, plastic in water, bottle return bills and opposed legislation that could alter regulations related to sand and gravel mining due to the impact it could have on groundwater. Of special note, Michigan is the only state that does not have even a minimum standard for residential septic system inspection. Efforts are ongoing to work at all levels from township to state to remedy this important liability in protecting ground and surface water from sewage impacts.

Michigan leagues are continuing to monitor bills that would remove local control for sand and gravel mining.

Wisconsin

On 3/25/21, the LWV Milwaukee County natural resources committee held a virtual General Meeting entitled *"Keeping Milwaukee Safe: COVID-19 and Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage District's (MMSD) Infrastructure Needs."* Of particular interest was the segment *"Testing for COVID-19 at MMSD."* Access the recording of the meeting [Here](#).

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) received a straddling community diversion application and supporting documents from the Village of Somers in March 2021, requesting diversion of up to 1.2 million gallons of water per day. The map at the right shows the diversion area.

WDNR review of the application will include a public hearing, a public comment period and a determination by the WDNR whether or not the application meets the [Great Lake Compact](#) requirements for a straddling community exception to the ban on diversions. More information can be found [Here](#)



The Foxconn deal touted by former President Trump and negotiated by former Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker has been renegotiated due to Foxconn's failure to fulfill its obligations. The new contract, announced by Wisconsin Governor Evers, is scant on details. A huge diversion of Lake Michigan water had been granted to Mount Pleasant, Wisconsin, site of the promised Foxconn manufacturing facility. A news story about the renegotiated contract can be found [Here](#)

Speakers Bureau Offerings

During the pandemic, the LWVLMR Education Committee, in cooperation with the Advocacy Committee, worked to find new strategies for providing environmental education programming for local leagues and civic organizations via Zoom.

The following represent examples of just some of the programs available through our Speakers Bureau. The Bureau is comprised of veteran League members, education professionals, attorneys, public officials, and environmental and community activists. All share a commitment to



and environmental and community activists. All share a commitment to LVWLMR's mission to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government and act on selected governmental issues affecting the Lake Michigan watershed.

Emerging Great Lakes Water Issues.

An overview of the emerging issues of PFAS contamination, lead in public water supplies and Great Lakes water diversions under the Compact.

The Great Lakes, Challenges and Solutions.

An introduction to LVWLMR and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Local examples of GLRI projects are presented so attendees can better relate to the success stories. Highlight state interests, policy updates, and what could be done to improve our waters of the Great Lakes.



How Green is the Water?

Causes of algal blooms including nutrient overloads, why they're a problem, and what can be done.

Rooting for Clean Water

Rain gardens and why they and native plants are important for decreasing the impact of heavy rain events and the pollution that travels into our waterways; how to create and maintain a rain garden.

Stormwater from the Ground Up

Problems associated with combined sewer overflows, and what can be done about them.

The Clean Water Act and the Future of Our Freshwater Resources

Line 5 and Great Lakes Sustainability

Addressing Technical and Legal Aspects of Lead Contamination

The historic, technical, and environmental aspects of how the lead problem arises, how our current regulations address lead in municipal systems, and suggestions for policy and regulatory remedies.

Current Water-Related Issues – State Specific discussions

Since issues come and go, this will not be a formal presentation but a conversation with attendees about current challenges facing Lake Michigan and its shoreline in their specific state.

If you would like to schedule a virtual presentation for your local league, ILO, or civic/community organization, please contact Education Chair, Mary Beth Nawor and President, Elizabeth Joy Guscott-Mueller at lvwlakemichigan@gmail.com.

2021 Conference and Annual Meeting

Save The Date!



**This year's Conference and Annual Meeting will be held on
Saturday, October 15 - 16**

At the moment we are planning for a "hybrid" (in person with a virtual option) Conference and Annual Meeting on October 15 - 16 at the Spring House and Spa, in Porter, Indiana. We will of course, follow all COVID guidelines that may be in effect at the time of the meeting.

All Leagues that have paid dues for the **2021-22** fiscal year are eligible for one voting delegate to our annual meeting. During the Annual Meeting, we will elect new officers, approve the new budget, and our program, and take care of other business.

Check our website for more details coming in September!

Renewal Season Coming Soon

The new fiscal year for the League of Women Voters Lake Michigan Region will begin on July 1, 2021. So it will soon be time to renew your membership and support our efforts to protect precious Lake Michigan resources. Dues will remain unchanged.

- **\$25 for leagues with fewer than 50 members**
- **\$40 for leagues with 50-100 members**
- **\$50 for leagues with over 100 members (including state leagues)**

Please Join Us!

Nominations Due July 15, 2021

**Know someone passionate about Lake Michigan?
Nominate them to the LWVLMR Board!**

The LWVLMR Nominating Committee is now recruiting the slate of officers for 2021-2023. The Committee is tasked with slating the offices of Secretary, Treasurer, Nominating Committee Chair, and Nominating Committee members.

Candidates are eligible if they are a member of a local League that pays dues to LWVLMR. Self-nominations are welcome.

Please e-mail nominations by July 15, 2021 to Nominating Committee Chair Luan Burton at lvvlakemichigan@gmail.com.

Remembering Jeanette Neagu



Jeanette worked tirelessly to protect the Dunes and Lake Michigan

A graduate of the University of Chicago, Jeanette was retired from her career as a Social Worker. She and her husband were both active in the League of Women Voters. A Past President of LWVLMR and Past President of Save the Dunes, Jeanette's contributions to LMR Board discussions, fresh ideas and knowledge of Lake Michigan advocacy efforts were invaluable.

We found a 2008 news article from NWI Times about Jeanette, chronicling a LWVLMR presentation in Indiana on a "freezing Saturday morning." We can hear her voice in the quotes set forth below, and think this excerpt perfectly demonstrates Jeanette's forthright common sense and passionate advocacy when it comes to the Great Lakes.....



VALPARAISO | Members of the League of Women Voters listened to a guest speaker on a freezing Saturday morning



talk about the variety of threats Lake Michigan faces.

Jeanette Neagu, co-president of the Lake Michigan Interleague Organization, which is part of the league, presented slides and facts about legislation, economics and the health of the Great Lakes Basin.



"I'm a passionate lover of our Great Lakes, and whenever I see people coming out early in the morning in zero-degree weather, I realize I'm not alone in my love," Neagu said.

The organization educates people on the problems facing the Great Lakes, encourages public participation and supports scientific research and shoreline management.

"We believe that national resources should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems," Neagu said.

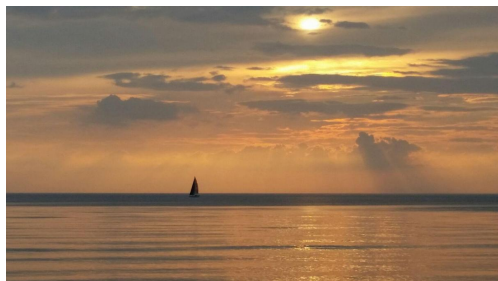
The Great Lakes comprise 20 percent of the world's freshwater supply, she said.

"But the Great Lakes are a nonrenewable resource. You can't just drain it indefinitely," Neagu said. "They were formed by our glaciers, and you have to think in terms of future generations. We don't have a right to steal such a treasure....."

Read more about Jeanette's Legacy [Here](#).



Former Save the Dunes President Jeanette Neagu receives a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017 from the Hoosier Environmental Council for her more than six decades as an environmental advocate.



Photos by Lisa Harris

What Can You Do?
Vote like the Lake depends on it!

DONATE

To Find out more about Lake Michigan Issues
Visit our website [LWVLMR](#)

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