

Splash!

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF
LWV LAKE MICHIGAN REGION

June 2020

Statement on Environmental Justice

The League of Women Voters Lake Michigan Region has been educating the public about threats to the health of Lake Michigan for 51 years. We have also been advocating for environmental policies that protect the waters, the wildlife, and the people that depend on Lake Michigan for their very lives. There is no doubt that contamination and other adverse events and policies have impacted some communities more directly than others. Examples of this aspect are many. When we learned about the lead-poisoning of the residents of Flint, Michigan, it awakened us to the issue of other lead pipes being used to transport Lake Michigan water to all of its users. The coal ash ponds whose heavy metals leach into Lake Michigan are surrounded by communities whose health is affected by these toxic elements. We stand against utilities shutting customers' water off, especially during this pandemic.

We believe clean water is a right for all. There is no doubt that environmental activism must recognize environmental justice issues, meaning that Black communities and other communities of color are more directly and disproportionately impacted by contaminated air, water, and land. Therefore, we must and will use our voice to support those whose voices have not been acknowledged.

For the LWVUS position statement "Standing in Solidarity with the Black Community" click [here](#):

SAVE THE DATE!

October 16-17, 2020

Our Annual Meeting will be a virtual gathering hosted by the League of Women Voters of Indiana.

Your LWVLMR is doing its best to carry on as much as is possible even in these extraordinary times.

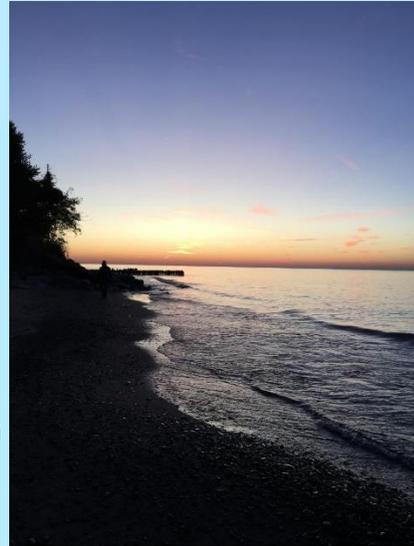
The October 16-17 Annual Meeting is currently being planned as a virtual gathering with a business meeting and informative online presentations.

At the business meeting portion we will elect officers and approve our program items, bylaws, and the upcoming FY year budget.

In addition to our business meeting, we plan to include interesting, informative, and engaging virtual educational programs, a speaker, and other activities, as well as an update on our advocacy efforts.

This event will be open to everyone, but only designated delegates from dues paying member Leagues will be able to vote during the business portion.

If you have questions about the upcoming event, contact Cheryl Chapman, Co-Chair of the 2020 Annual Meeting. Thanks!



Advocacy Update

In December, 2019, LWVLMR joined LWV of Indiana, the LWVs of La Porte County, the Calumet Area, Greater Lafayette, Montgomery County, and Porter County, Save the Dunes, and other partners on a letter to the Chief Judge of the US District Court for the Northern District of Indiana. The letter addressed the proposed revised Consent Decree with US Steel regarding its April, 2017 hexavalent chromium permit violations. We objected to the financial penalty, stating the proposed amount was too low, and



asked for expanded public notification requirements, public forums on Consent Decree implementation, and additional water monitoring.

In February, LWVLMR joined other environmental advocates in sending letters to House and Senate Committee chairs, and 75 legislators from the Great Lakes region. The letters asked that the federal government mandate that utilities stop water service shutoffs, and also that the legislators support funding for water infrastructure and programs.

The LWV of the United States submitted a comment letter in March urging the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to withdraw proposed changes to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementing regulations that would remove public participation in and science-based review of large federal projects. The League also joined a coalition letter started by the Water Protection Network which was signed by over 300 organizations.

LWVLMR joined LWV Michigan on an Oil & Water Don't Mix Coalition letter in April. Addressed to Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, the letter asked for a delayed review of Embridge's Line 5 tunnel permit, in light of the State of Emergency due to Covid-19.

Also in April, LWVLMR signed on to letters to the Great Lakes Congressional delegation on water infrastructure, especially relating to Covid-19 concerns. We asked for a moratorium on water shut offs; investment in drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure; and continued, increased investment in safe drinking water infrastructure through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

In May, LWVLMR was a co-signer on comments objecting to the EPA's "Censoring Science" rulemaking. The letter was initiated by the Environmental Law and Policy Center.

PFAS Regulations Ready for Adoption in Michigan

Michigan is nearing the finishing line in the State Rule-Making Process for PFAS contamination in their drinking water. These standards will limit 7 per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. It will also include sampling requirements, public notification requirements and laboratory certification criteria. The rules should be adopted this Spring. Read more [here](#).

Know a great leader? Nominate Her for a LWVLMR Board Position!

The LWVLMR Nominating Committee is currently working on a slate of officers for 2020-2022. It is tasked with nominating individuals for the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary (to complete the term ending 2021), and next year's Nominating Committee Chair.

Candidates must be a member of a local League that is a dues paying member of LWVLMR. Feel free to put forward your own candidacy if you'd like to get involved.

Please forward your suggested candidates to [Nominating Committee Chair Elizabeth J. Guscott-Mueller](#).

Worrisome changes to NEPA/CEQ Federal Policies

LWVLMR joined LWV-US, LWV-IN, LWV-MI, and LWV-WI in signing on to a NEPA regulatory comment letter, regarding CEQ's proposed NEPA rollbacks.

NEPA, the National Environmental Policy Act, was the first major environmental law in the United States and is often called the "Magna Carta" of Federal environmental laws. NEPA requires Federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of proposed major Federal actions prior to making decisions. NEPA established CEQ within the Executive Office of the President to ensure that Federal agencies meet their obligations under NEPA.

Specifically, the sign-on letter raised three overarching concerns with the proposed rule.

1. The proposed regulations attempt to inappropriately limit the applicability and scope of the NEPA analysis;
2. would interfere with the integrity of, and limit the value of, the environmental review process; and,
3. try to restrict input from the public and other agencies and interfere with judicial review.

2019 Annual Conference Recap - The Great Lakes and Groundwater



2019 Annual Meeting Conference Attendees

Lakeside Inn in Lakeside, Michigan, was the site for the 2019 Annual Meeting and Conference of the LWV Lake Michigan Region this past October 25-26, 2019. Saturday's annual meeting was well attended with 29 Leagues from all four states represented.

The weekend began with three field trips on Friday afternoon focused on a Pokagon Band of Potawatomi wetland restoration site, Galien River County Park's recent conservation efforts of upland and significant wetland habitats, and a tour of the Galien River Sanitary District Sewer Authority wastewater treatment plant.



Jennifer Kanine, Director of Natural Resources for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi speaks to Leaguers about their restoration efforts.



Leaguers out touring Galien River County Park.



Liz Kirkwood, Executive Director of For the Love of Water (FLOW) speaks about groundwater and the Great Lakes.

Friday evening's dinner speaker was Liz Kirkwood of [FLOW](#) (For the Love of Water) who spoke about the important relationship between groundwater and lakes. Ms. Kirkwood also addressed the following Lake Michigan issues faced by the four states of LWVLM.

- Michigan- League members are fighting for the closing of the Line 5 pipeline, and working to create a state law regarding proper maintenance of septic systems, which are still in use for 50% of its residents.
- Indiana - League members are supporting litigation condemning lax practices and reporting by industries along the lake, in particular, the recent spill of cyanide and ammonia from the ArcelorMittal plant that went unreported for several days while residents unknowingly swam and fished in the contaminated waters.
- Illinois - League concerns include stopping the advance of Asian carp and other invasive species into the lake, and ongoing efforts to keep pollutants from our large populated areas out of the lake and out of the rivers that

ultimately lead to the giant "dead zone" at the mouth of the Mississippi River in the Gulf of Mexico.

- Wisconsin - League members have been fighting efforts to circumvent the restrictions on excess water withdrawals from Lake Michigan according to International Joint Commission Rules. They also have a "dead zone" in Green Bay.
- Groundwater contamination, extraction of groundwater and lake water in enormous quantities by commercial bottled water companies, and excess nutrient runoff of phosphorus and nitrogen, as well as salt, PAH's, and *e.coli*, combined with heavy rainfall and flooding, are problems common to all four states.

Louise Petering of LWV Milwaukee County was awarded the Palleon Advocacy Award by LWVLMR's President Krista Grimm, LWV LaGrange, IL.



Louise Petering, center, of the League of Women Voters of Milwaukee County received the 2019 Palleon Advocacy Award from LWVLMR President Krista Grimm, left, and Board member Marge Palleon, right, at our Annual Meeting. Congratulations Louise, and thanks for your decades of work on behalf of clean and healthy waters!

Finally, presentations by board members David Mueller (LWV Lake Forest/Lake Bluff, IL) and Suzanne Dixon (LWV Holland Area, MI) addressed a new class of carcinogenic and mutagenic pollutants generally called PFA's, whose toxicity is measured in parts-per-trillion and which are endemic in our environment.



LWVLMR Board member David Mueller speaks on PFAs.

Memberships and Donations

The League of Women Voters Lake Michigan Region promotes political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government and acts on selected government issues affecting the Lake Michigan watershed. The LWVLMR does not support or oppose any political party or candidate.

Our primary method of support comes from annual membership fees from local League members, which fund our Education and Advocacy activities related to the health and safety of our shared Lake Michigan. We also accept donations any time of year to supplement our work.

Donations by check can be made out to, League of Women Voters Lake Michigan Region, 332 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 634, Chicago, IL 60604. You can also contact us by email lwvlakemichigan@gmail.com.



How To Stay Connected

If you are interested in joining the next LWVLMR virtual board meeting on September 12, 2020, contact us at lwvlakemichigan@gmail.com to get on the list to attend.

LWVLMR membership dues are coming up again! Visit our [website](#) to download your Dues form today.

Friendly Reminder to Local Leagues: kindly drop us a line with updated contact information if your officers changed at your year end meetings.

Are you interested in becoming involved in our efforts? Contact us at lwvlakemichigan@gmail.com to get started.

STAY CONNECTED



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