

**LWVCA STUDY PAGES – JANUARY 2012**  
**GREAT LAKES ECOSYSTEM CONCURRENCE AND STATE PROGRAM PLANNING**  
*Prepared by LWV Ohio and LWVCA's Program Development Committee (PDC)*

**PART I - Great Lakes Ecosystem Position Concurrence**

**INTRODUCTION**

This spring the League of Women Voters of Ohio was asked by the Michigan League to concur on their Great Lakes Ecosystem position. The Michigan League believes that the Great Lakes states working together could be a more effective voice to advocate for the protection of the Great Lakes, and are urging all state Leagues on the Great Lakes to concur. LWVUS advised that such a concurrence by state Leagues in the Great Lakes basin would be helpful.

**BASIC FACTS ON THE GREAT LAKES BASIN**



Image Source: Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. More information at <http://tinyurl.com/greatlakesmap>

The Great Lakes are one of our country's most unique and precious resources, providing freshwater for 33 million people who live within the basin and supporting the region's ecosystem and economy. The Great Lakes Basin contains nearly 20 percent of the earth's fresh surface water. It is the only freshwater system of its kind in size and ecological diversity. While the Great Lakes are a vast and valuable resource, they are not unlimited. Each year groundwater recharge, rainfall, and snowmelt replenishes only about 1% in the basin. The other 99 percent is finite and non-renewable.

Lake Erie is vitally important to Ohio's environment and economy. It supplies drinking water to 11 million people, 3 million in Ohio, and supports 1 out of every 10 jobs along the Ohio Lake Erie Basin. Lake Erie generates \$10.1 billion a year to the Ohio economy in tourism and travel revenue, a third of that from hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching.

In 2008, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact (Compact) was ratified by the Great Lakes states and territories, passed by Congress, and signed into law. There is a companion agreement within the Canadian Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. These agreements provide the most comprehensive water use protections for the Great Lakes in the last century.

For the first time in the Great Lakes basin, the Compact:

- Provides the Great Lakes, their tributaries, and groundwater with the same environmental protection standards;
- Establishes protection of the ecosystem and the economies that depend on the Great Lakes as a priority everywhere in the basin;
- Ensures that every Great Lakes state and territory will have the same set of rational protections.

The Compact protects the Great Lakes from harm by implementing a strong and effective water management program. The agreements close the door on exporting Great Lakes waters by cargo tankers throughout the world ; provide an opportunity to address all water uses in a comprehensive way; and guarantee the long-term protection and sound management of the Great Lakes water for generations to come.

Read more in Lake Erie Lakewide Management Plan Annual Report 2011. Download document as a PDF at [binational.net/lamp/le\\_ar\\_2011\\_en.pdf](http://binational.net/lamp/le_ar_2011_en.pdf).

## STATE ACTIONS ON THE GREAT LAKES COMPACT

Each State Legislature must pass legislation to put into action the program and protections required by the Compact. In May 2012, by a 20-12 vote, the Ohio Senate passed House Bill 473, a measure Ohio needed to pass by a December 2013 deadline to comply with the Great Lakes Compact.

Under the bill, businesses wishing to make withdrawals exceeding 2.5 million gallons a day from Lake Erie, 1 million gallons a day from rivers and streams feeding the lake and 100,000 gallons a day from streams defined as "high-quality" must obtain permits from the state. However, the daily usage amounts in the bill are based on a 90-day average instead of a daily calculation -- a key sticking point for opponents. Read more about the vote, as reported by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 22, 2012: <http://tinyurl.com/ohiolakeerievote>

## CHALLENGES TO THE ECOSYSTEM

Some diversion of water occurs within and out of the Great Lakes Basin from previous agreements; e.g., water has been diverted from Lake Michigan at Chicago. The Compact prohibits most new diversions and includes goals for water conservation and sustainable use. (See more at "Our Waters: Diversions of Great Lakes Waters" at <http://www.glwi.freshwater.uwm.edu/ourwaters/documents/DiversionsCWeb.pdf> ).

Western and Southern States want to divert water from the Great Lakes as more of the population moves to those areas. The City of Waukesha, Wisconsin, in the next county west of Milwaukee County and outside of the Great Lakes Basin wants Lake Michigan water to continue its economic growth. Since the Compact was approved, this would be the first proposed diversion of Great Lakes water but must navigate a long approval process first. (Baltimore Post-Examiner June 20, 2012)

Lake levels are determined by the combined influence of precipitation (the primary source of natural water supply to the Great Lakes), upstream inflows, groundwater, surface water runoff, and evaporation, diversions into and out of the system, consumptive uses, dredging and water level regulation. The interplay between human activities and the ecology of the lakes is highly complex. (Read more about Great Lakes Water Levels and their Use and Diversion at <http://tinyurl.com/greatlakeswaterlevels>.)

Although the Great Lakes are large, they are sensitive to pollutants. Pollution sources include runoff from agricultural lands, waste from cities, industrial sites and ships. Human activities such as: poor agricultural practices, draining of wetlands, channelization of streams and rivers, management of lake water levels for human uses, development of all kinds, invasive species and air emissions have had great impacts on the ecosystems and biodiversity. (Read more at the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes National Program Office at [epa.gov/greatlakes](http://epa.gov/greatlakes)). The EPA Great Lakes office oversees and helps Great Lakes stakeholders, such as federal/ state/tribal/local governments, non-government organizations, industry, and private citizens, work together to protect, maintain, and restore the integrity of the Great Lakes.

## GLOSSARY of TERMS

**Great Lakes Charter:** An agreement by the Governors and Premiers of the Great Lakes States and Provinces of Principles for the management of Great Lakes Water Resources. The purpose is to conserve levels and flow, protect and conserve environmental balance and provide for cooperative programs and management.

**The Great Lakes Compact:** an agreement between eight states and two Canadian provinces that seeks to prevent diversions of Great Lakes water out of the Great Lakes basin. It was approved by Congress.

**The Great Lakes Commission:** established by the Great Lakes Basin Compact to help its Member states and provinces speak with a unified voice and carry out the terms and requirements of the Great Lakes Basin Compact, as noted in Article 1: To promote the orderly, integrated, and comprehensive development, use, and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes Basin.

**Basin Compact:** To promote the orderly, integrated, and comprehensive development, use, and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes Basin.

**Ecosystem:** a community of living organisms in conjunction with the nonliving components of their environment interacting as a system. The components are linked together through nutrient cycles and energy flows. (Source: Wikipedia)

**Diversion:** any transfer of water across watershed boundaries through a man-made pipeline or canal.

**Watershed:** the area of land where all of the water that is under it or drains off of it goes into the same place. (Source: EPA)

## CONCURRENCE INFORMATION

The proposed concurrence position includes more detail than related LWVUS Natural Resources positions or LWVO positions on Water and Interbasin Transfer of Water. The LWVUS would be in a stronger position to act on national and international issues about the Great Lakes if all the states in the region shared the same ecosystem position. State Leagues and their members would continue to act on state concerns related to the Great Lakes ecosystem.

## CONSIDER THE MICHIGAN POSITION

Please read and consider the 5 articles of the Michigan Position. The concurrence decision should be reached by consensus: an overall sense of the group. LWVCA members will be asked to determine “concurrence” or “no concurrence” for each article. **However, the Michigan position must be agreed to in its entirety. It is not subject to modification beyond changing each LWV of Michigan reference to LWV of Ohio.**

The consensus should be based on the following criteria:

1. Do you as a League member agree the LWVO needs this position? By concurrence?
2. Will you support the position and subsequent action based on the position?
3. Is effective citizen action foreseeable?

## LWV OF MICHIGAN POSITION ON GREAT LAKES ECOSYSTEM

**Adopted 1974, 1981; title amended 1985; Great Lakes Diversions & Consumptive Uses Position and Great Lakes System Position combined 1988; revised 2005. (See the position in full as a PDF at <http://tinyurl.com/lwvmiposition>).**

The League of Women Voters of Michigan supports preserving and enhancing the environmental integrity and quality of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Ecosystem.

We support the attainment and maintenance of high water quality standards throughout the Great Lakes Basin, with emphasis on water pollution prevention. Water conservation should be a high priority of all governments in the Basin.

**I. Protective Measures**

To achieve protection and improvement of this valuable, international resource, the League of Women Voters of Michigan supports efforts to:

- A. Limit uses of "fragile," historical, cultural and scenic shoreline areas.
- B. Preserve wild and pristine areas within the watershed, with no new development in these special habitats without adherence to strict criteria as prescribed by federal, state, or local governments.
- C. Provide for appropriate recreational opportunities in and public access to sensitive areas without destruction or harm to the ecosystem.
- D. Protect the quality of the air and waters of the ecosystem by strict adherence to agricultural, industrial, residential, environmental, and commercial zoning regulations that prohibit the introduction of toxic or polluting discharges or detrimental land use techniques within the Basin.
- E. Protect the remaining dune formations. Enforce strict regulations of sand dune mining or development on the dunes.
- F. Strengthen upstream land management to eliminate sources of siltation and pollution.
- G. Control the invasion and spread of non-native aquatic and terrestrial nuisance species.

**Concurrence** \_\_\_\_\_ **No concurrence** \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Threats to the Ecosystem**

The League of Women Voters of Michigan opposes the following activities as they can lead to the degradation of the special natural resources of the Great Lakes Ecosystem:

- A. Inefficient or excessive water uses. Proposals for new or increased withdrawals within the Basin, e.g. for agricultural or municipal uses, should be carefully evaluated before being permitted. Withdrawals should be regularly monitored for potential or actual damage to the ecosystem.
- B. Destruction of marshes and other wetlands throughout the watershed. Mitigation should be accepted only as a last resort. Mitigation proposals should be rigorously evaluated and projects should be strictly monitored to assure no net loss to the ecosystem.
- C. New or increased diversions or transfers by any means of Great Lakes waters and adjacent ground waters to a place outside the Basin. Projects already in place should be carefully monitored and restricted if there is evidence of damage to the ecosystem.
- D. Dredging and filling of river inlets, harbors, lakes or wetlands except for tightly-controlled, non-degrading and non-repetitive activities.
- E. Discharge to air or water of toxic pollutants and other material from industrial, agricultural, residential or commercial operations that may damage the ecosystem in violation of laws and ordinances.

**Concurrence** \_\_\_\_\_ **No concurrence** \_\_\_\_\_

**III. Public Participation**

The League of Women Voters of Michigan supports informed and responsible action on behalf of the preservation of the Great Lakes Ecosystem. Relevant information should be readily available to the public. Opportunities for public input should be timely, accessible, convenient and well-advertised.

**Concurrence** \_\_\_\_\_ **No concurrence** \_\_\_\_\_

**IV. Role of Government**

The League of Women Voters of Michigan supports:

- A. Coordination of functions among various governmental agencies charged with protecting the Great Lakes and elimination of unnecessary overlap.
- B. Use of area-wide coordinated management plans and techniques in the solving of Great Lakes Ecosystem problems.

- C. Participation by all affected governments in the Basin in review and decision-making on Great Lakes agreements and projects, facilitated in open meetings and hearings.
- D. Strengthening of existing mechanisms for intergovernmental discussions and decision-making.
- E. Separation of responsibility for submitting recommendations for governmental projects from issuing permits for such projects.
- F. Monitoring and enforcement of treaties, ordinances, laws and master plans.

**Concurrence** \_\_\_\_\_ **No concurrence** \_\_\_\_\_

V. Research Priorities

The League of Women Voters of Michigan believes that research on Great Lakes issues should focus on:

- A. Effective, non-toxic control and removal of invasive aquatic and terrestrial species.
- B. Restoration of health to the overall resource.
- C. Survival of native aquatic and terrestrial species and their nutrient sources.
- D. Continual testing of Great Lakes water quality for impact from the following: pesticides and fertilizers, resistant bacteria, persistent pharmaceuticals and other chemicals.
- E. Evaluation of water accountability systems, groundwater monitoring and water use planning and conservation efforts throughout the Basin.

**Concurrence** \_\_\_\_\_ **No concurrence** \_\_\_\_\_

**PART II - LWVO State Program Planning**

**INTRODUCTION**

Grassroots program planning is a unique League feature. The program planning meeting gives every member opportunity to review existing League positions and select the issues upon which League will spend time, talent, energy and money.

This is your chance to voice your opinion concerning what LWVO positions should be adopted for the 2013-2015 agenda for action at the state convention May 4-5, 2013. Please read the summaries of the current positions below before attending your unit discussion. If you would like more information concerning the positions, you may access the Agenda for Action 2011-2013 as a PDF at <http://tinyurl.com/lwvoagenda>. If you wish to see a hard copy of this publication, please call the LWVCA office at 281-8683 for details.

**DEFINITIONS AND THINGS TO CONSIDER**

**Retention of Current Positions:** Current positions not recommended to be reviewed/updated or dropped will be assumed to be recommended to be retained as is.

**Review/ Update:** This is a study of limited scope to evaluate a position in light of new information, changed circumstances, and/or conflict with another position. Consider:

- Is the position sufficient as it stands to achieve the desired change?
- Is there a need and is there member interest in altering the position?
- Are there enough interested members to form the core of that study committee from your League?
- Do we have financial resources to update this position (about \$200 per year)?

**New Study/Program Item:** It is anticipated that a League suggesting a study for a new position will form the core study committee for the work involved. Studies typically last 12-24 months and have budgets of approximately \$200-300 each year to reimburse study members for their expenses.

A new study should be a critical issue for which we lack a position to take action and needs a study. You indicate the topic of the study, the scope/parameters of the study and rationale for pursuing a position on the topic.

Consider:

- Is there a national position that could be used for this?
- Would the study result in a position that could then influence state legislative actions?
- Could the League make a unique contribution in this area or does it duplicate the work of others?
- Are there enough interested members in your League to form the core of the committee?
- Do we have financial resources to study the issue?

**Dropping a Position:** Is there a position that is no longer relevant/ needed?

**Building Support for Your Recommendation(s):** To be a recommended item at the 2013 Convention, a program recommendation must have significant support among Ohio Leagues as indicated on local Leagues' Report Forms. Therefore, LWVO urges Leagues to build support for their recommendations for a review/update, a study or for dropping a position by reaching out to other Ohio Leagues during the program-planning process December-February and asking them to make the same recommendation. A listserv will be set up to facilitate discussions among Leagues.

**Legislative Priority:** Each League is asked to recommend one top priority position for LWVO to work on in 2013-2015. Consider:

- Is this issue of paramount importance over the next two years?
- Can this issue be addressed most effectively through the state (rather than federal/local)
- Are there local League members well informed about this issue/position and willing to advocate for it?
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- Is this issue current (in step with the times and member thinking)?
- Can League make a real contribution, or will it merely duplicate the work of others?
- Will timing and political realities permit League to be effective on this issue?

## **CURRENT LWVO POSITIONS**

Below are summaries of the positions. See the positions in full as a PDF at [www.tinyurl.com/lwvoagenda](http://www.tinyurl.com/lwvoagenda).

### **GOVERNMENT**

#### **Constitution**

Support a clear, flexible, organized, and internally consistent Constitution. Support specification that taxation is a General Assembly responsibility and that funding should be flexible. Support independence of judges, with preference for merit selection. Oppose term limits for the General Assembly.

#### **Apportionment/Districting**

Support an impartial districting process with opportunity for citizen participation. Support districts that are compact, contiguous, bounded by a non-intersecting line, and follow political boundaries as much as possible.

#### **State Government Finance and Taxation**

Support taxation that is fair and equitable, provides adequate resources for government programs while allowing flexibility for financing future program changes, is understandable to the taxpayer and encourages compliance, and is easy to administer.

### **SOCIAL POLICY**

#### **Primary and Secondary Education**

Support the use of public funds only for public schools. Support an elected State Board of Education whose responsibility is policy making/planning. Support state education standards as a method of attaining a high-quality education. Support state funding for education that guarantees a realistic and equitable level of per-pupil expenditures, and support local school districts assuming a reasonable share of the financial burden.

### **Higher Education**

Support funding by the state to ensure that all Ohio citizens have access to higher education that provides general education and job preparation. Support Board of Regents, appointed by the Governor with confirmation by the Senate, to be a planning, coordinating board with broad policy-making powers.

### **Juvenile Justice**

Support community-based, least restrictive placement; rights and humane treatment of children who are juvenile offenders; alternative educational services; gender-specific treatment programs; unbiased treatment regardless of race or ethnicity; statewide uniform standards for dealing with juvenile records. Oppose holding children in adult jails.

### **Capital Punishment**

Support abolition of the death penalty and a moratorium on use of the death penalty.

### **Human Trafficking**

1. Human forced labor and sex trafficking should be stopped through legislation and changes in public policy.
2. Victims of human trafficking should be provided with services on an as-needed basis to facilitate integration into the community, including but not limited to counseling, drug and alcohol treatment, safe housing, physical and mental health care, legal representation, job training, ESL/GED/education and employment assistance.
3. Minors who have been commercially sexually exploited or forced into slave labor should be legally considered as victims and given special physical and mental health care.
4. Cooperation and collaboration among state and local agencies is necessary to enforce prohibitions and prosecute traffickers and other offenders (consumers).
5. There should be aggressive enforcement of laws dealing with traffickers and offenders (consumers).
6. Strategies to reduce the demand for commercial sex and forced labor trafficking should be employed by law enforcement agencies and the courts (an example would be court-ordered attendance at “john schools”).
7. Training and education of the public, law enforcement, and service providers should be widely available.
8. Funding (state and local) should be provided as necessary to treat victims, prosecute traffickers and consumers, and enhance awareness of the issue through training.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **Water**

Support policies and procedures that provide for joint, cooperative planning and administration along watershed lines and across political boundaries; stringent water quality standards accompanied by strong enforcement and means of implementation; and adequate state financing, including incentives to local governments and industries for expediting water pollution abatement.

### **Solid Waste**

Support the philosophy that solid waste, from generation to ultimate disposal, must be purposefully and systematically controlled by all levels of government in order to provide efficient service, protect the environment,

and achieve successful resource recovery. Support measures to forestall depletion of our natural resources and to recover nonrenewable resources.

#### **Hazardous Materials and Hazardous Waste**

Support state policies and programs that emphasize the following hazardous waste management options in order of priority: waste reduction, toxicity reduction, and waste elimination; waste separation and concentration; energy/material recovery; waste exchange; and chemical, biological, physical, and thermal treatment.

#### **Land Use**

Support both urban revitalization and farmland preservation and the curbing of urban sprawl. Support the role of the state in providing authority and incentives for local governments to exercise innovative additional land use planning and regulatory techniques such as land banking, planned unit developments, purchase and transfer of development rights, limited development ordinances, scenic easements, agricultural districts, cluster development, conservation reserves and land trusts, urban enterprise zones, environmental impact assessments, impact fees, tax abatement, and zoning efforts. Support use of eminent domain under certain circumstances.

#### **Interbasin Transfer of Water**

Support diversion of water only after study of the ecological, economic, and social implications indicate that diversion would be sustainable and only after the development of a plan to protect the affected areas during all stages of development, operation, termination, and post-termination. Support public participation in the decision-making process. Support participation of all concerned governments in Great Lakes resource decision-making.