**Upper Mississippi River Region Inter-League Organization**

**Retreat: La Crosse Wisconsin June 11 & 12, 2023**

**Present:** Gretchen Sabel (MN), Kay Slama (MN), Catherine Franczyk (IL), Carolyn Mahlum-Jenkins (WI), Nancy Hill (WI), Mary Ellen Miller (IA), E. J. Gallagher (IA), Nancy Porter (IA), Tamara Prenosil (IA), Bobbie Cox (IL), Deborah Turner (LWVUS President)

**Zoom participants:** Sue Wilson (IA), Lee Ekstrom (IL), Paula Ekstrom (IL), Jessica Rohloff (LWVUS Regional Consultant)

**Sunday, June 11, 2023, Freight House Restaurant**

Personal introductions – all members present introduced themselves with descriptions of LWV involvement and environmental activities. E. J. Gallagher (IA Blackhawk/Bremmer) is the new Iowa alternate pending approval by the LWVIA Board. Other general information discussed included: OWLS zoom technology used by libraries; Mary Ellen Miller said she likes to use the book The 5 Stages of Organizations by ???; the book For Love of River: The Minnesota by Darby Nelson with John Hickman, Editor. Nancy Porter distributed the MRN Mississippi 1 Action Alert – Email Congress: Protect and Increase Funding for the Farm Bill Conservation Programs.

Bonnie Cox (IL Jo Daviess Co) showed two voiceover PowerPoint presentations developed by Jo Davies County LWV. One PowerPoint reviewed the origins of the UMRR-ILO and the other explained the need for a multi-league organization to address environmental problems and solutions that do not stop at political boundaries.

Deborah Turner (LWVUS President) said there was no one staff person assigned to clean water issues at the LWVUS headquarters. The LWVUS might write an amicus brief. LWVUS takes credit for promoting the Clean Water Act. The ILO, state and local Leagues can take action as long as the action is under this umbrella (See LWV Impact on Issues: A Guide to Public Policy Positions of the League of Women Voters – available online or by ordering a printed version.)

Dr. Turner will look into whether the volunteers for the UMRR-ILO are covered under LWVUS liability insurance. The UMRR-ILO is incorporated in Wisconsin. We need to review LWVUS bylaws to refine our understanding about taking actions in or for the state LWV chapters.

We discussed developing an at-large possibility for membership because St. Louis and Kansas City are interested in joining the UMRR-ILO. There is no definite answer whether the LWV of Missouri would be interested in joining. As long as we are revising our bylaws this is a time to pursue the possibility. Members of the board could write a paragraph about how the UMRR-ILO has helped in their respective states.

The UMRR-ILO Board informed Dr. Turner about our experience getting LWVUS approval to advocate for Federal issues. There is a form that must be used. The UMRR-ILO will develop a procedure for using the form and storing supporting documents (such as each state’s mission statements and position statements). We may want to ask for LWVS approval to weigh in on the Stoner Memo.

(EPA last issued a policy memo on fertilizer pollution in 2011, commonly referred to as the [Stoner memo](https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/memo_nitrogen_framework.pdf). It recommended that states develop “nutrient reduction strategies” (NRSs) and set water quality standards called numeric nutrient criteria (NNC) to reduce fertilizer pollution in our nation’s waterways. Although many states adopted NRSs and numeric criteria, the approach was not uniform across the Mississippi River Basin. EPA issued a new [fertilizer pollution policy memo](https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-04/accelerating-nutrient-reductions-4-2022.pdf) on April 5, 2022. Overall, it is a small step forward, but it does not require the practices necessary to resolve our fertilizer pollution issues.  (Iowa Environmental Council)

**Monday, June 12, 2023 Unitarian Universalist Church**

**Succession Planning:** Discussed the need for a co- vice president, the original founders are stepping back, need to find our replacements, expand the size of the board, revise bylaws to explicitly state we have delegates (delete the term alternate) who all have voting privileges, put non-board members on committees, develop a formal board orientation, ongoing pursuit of connectivity between board members and committees.

* Gretchen Sabel said she would like to have someone to help with the communications responsibilities.
* Sue Wilson (IA Dubuque), one of the founding members of the UMRR-ILO announced she is stepping down from the board.

This announcement resulted in discussion about the need to develop a format for resignations to be included in a *Policies and Procedures* document. It was determined that a resignation would need a letter to the UMRR-ILO president as well as the respective state president. Delegates are appointed for two-year terms and need to be reappointed by their respective states.

**Bylaws Committee:** Four people at this meeting volunteered to be on the bylaws planning committee: E. J. Gallagher, Nancy Porter, Tamara Prenosil, and Kay Slama. Mary Ellen Miller suggested we email everyone who attended our annual meeting to ask them to be on a committee (such as the nominating committee, communications committee). Bylaws and roster should clearly state terms. We need to include the first three sentences from the LWVUS bylaws into our bylaws (as every local League needs to do).

**Program of Action:** This term is a term used by LWVUS. The UMRR-ILO has five programs each year plus the annual meeting.

* August 2023: Health soils and Farm Bill (Miller and Mahlun-Jenkins)
* October 2023: Sacket decision
* December 2023: CO2 Pipeline (Illinois)
* February 2024: St. Cloud – Circular Economy
* April 2024: Mississippi Compact
* May 2023 annual meeting: SMRT, MRRRI, Farm Bill

The LWVUS has a position on Inter-basin transfer of water. The presentation ‘Thinking like a Watershed’ is on the UMRR-ILO website.

UMRR-ILO will take advantage of exhibit opportunities (ex. Iowa Water Conference). Every state now has a pull up banner and exhibit materials. Each state has $200 allocated for attending conferences and can ask for more. The board can authorize overspending on a particular line item. We should consider giving more honorariums to our speakers. We could consider a display when the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge celebrates its 100-year anniversary in 2025.

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge is a 240,000-acre, 261-mile long National Wildlife Refuge located in and along the Upper Mississippi River. It runs from Wabasha, Minnesota in the north to Rock Island, Illinois in the south. [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upper_Mississippi_River_National_Wildlife_and_Fish_Refuge)

**Budget Discussion:** Catherine Francyzk reviewed what a budget report should include as well as the current Budget VS Actuals. Board members and volunteers should document for Catherine Out-of-Pocket expenses. This is important for grants. She will resend the form. We will begin to use Google Docs more. The Board Secretary will put minutes from previous years on Google Docs. The bylaws committee will review LWVUS documents regarding the treasurer’s responsibilities. Catherine Franczyk will meet Tamara Prenosil at a Dupaco Community Credit Union branch to add her name to the account as another signer. Gretchen Sabel will remain as a signer also.

Sample letters (letters to Congress people and letters to the editor) will be developed and placed in Google Docs.

**Reports:** The UMRR-ILO president, the action committee chair, and MRN representative should send an annual report to all four states prior to their annual meetings. Because there is no template for how ILOs should act, Mary Ellen Miller and Carolyn Mahlum-Jenkins will clarify which LWVUS office (board member or staff) should get these reports.

The UMRR-ILO Board would like clarification about attending LWUS Council in 2023 and the future.

Notes by Tamara Prenosil