Upper Mississippi River Region Inter-League Organization

Action Committee Video Conference 1-23-2023 at 4:00 P.M.

**Present:** Gretchen Sabel (MN), Kay Slama (MN), Lonnie McCauley (MN), Lynne Markus (MN), Shawn Stacy-Choinard (IL), Lee Ekstrom (IL), Paula Ekstrom (IL), Catherine Franczyk (IL),Carolyn Mahlum-Jenkins (WI), Nancy Hill (WI), Sue Wilson (IA), Mary Ellen Miller (IA), Tamara Prenosil (IA)

The participants of this meeting included twelve MRR-ILO Board members.

**Old Business:**

Minutes of Action Committee of 11-28-2022 were approved for filing.

**Affiliate Group Reports:** Mary Ellen Miller reported meeting with LWVUS Midwest Regional Organizer, Jessica Rohloff (320-460-2304. Jessica is from rural Minnesota. Her region includes 219 local chapters, six ILO chapters all in 10 states.

**Update on LWVUS Regarding Policy Advocacy Permission:** Carolyn Mahlum-Jenkins reported she continues to develop a template for the UMRR-ILO to use when asking LWVUS for permission to engage in advocacy work. She has begun with the MRRRI legislation. She is delaying the request letter for SMRT because there is some tweaking on that legislation that has not been finalized. After MRRRI, Carolyn will write a letter regarding CWFA.

**Information from the Lake Michigan ILO annual meeting in Sheboygan, WI:** Paul and Paula Ekstrom, Carolyn Mahlum-Jenkins and Catherine Franczyk attended. Catherine sent a written report which has been posted on the UMRR-ILO website. Carolyn Mahlum-Jenkins reported that Tammy Baldwin (Democratic Senator from Wisconsin) spoke at this meeting, and she was able to procure $1 Billion above the funding already earmarked for the Great Lakes Restoration Program. A dream would be to create the same type of program for the Mississippi River. It would also be good to create a ‘water diversion” protection for the Mississippi River similar to that for the Great Lakes.

**New Business:** LWVUS is redoing how dues are collected to be implemented in 2024. No information about how ILOs might be affected.

**Minnesota Carbon pipeline letter was sent.** Attached Reports on actions by members in their states.

**Webinar:** *The Decline in Wisconsin’s Conservation Legacy and the Shift in Balance of State Government* is being co-sponsored by the Chippewa Valley LWV and the La CrosseLWV. G. Sabel moved and L. McCauley seconded that the UMRR-ILO also be a co-sponsor of this virtual event. Motion carried. The only obligation for the UMRR-ILO is to publicize the event using its website and newsletter and members will try to publicize the event in LWV state newsletters.

**Reports on Issues and Actions by member in their states:**

**Illinois:**

Catherine Franczyk in on the Citizen Advisory Panel in her area. Shawn Stacy-Choinard reported on the progress of the Illinois Prairie Rivers Network. LWVIL will have an issues briefing in February. Lee Ekstrom reported the town of Cordova on the Mississippi has polluted drinking water.

From the US EPA website:

Recent sampling results provided by 3M indicate the widespread presence of a mixture of at least 19 different PFAS chemicals in drinking water within a 3-mile radius of the Cordova facility. Given the unique circumstances affecting this community, including more than five decades of PFAS discharges and the many types of PFAS chemicals found, EPA has concluded that the situation constitutes an imminent and substantial endangerment under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

**Iowa:** Coalitions developing to stop the CO2 pipelines going through Iowa. LWVIA has not signed on with any of these groups. LWVIA did include Environmental Issues as one of their six priority issues. Nancy Porter with the Mississippi River Network (MRN) and the UMRR-ILO will have exhibitor tables at the LWVIA state convention in Dubuque on June 9 & 10, 2023. The Muscatine LWV Chapter is looking into excess PFAS in the water at a mobile home park

**Minnesota:** The Public Utilities Commission requiring an assessment for a section of the Summit Pipeline. The DNR has established some criteria to characterize Lowland Conifer Old Growth forests and identified candidate sites that met these criteria and are working to develop management policies. The House and Senate passed a bill that would require state electricity to be 100% carbon-free by the year 2040. It will require energy companies to shift away from fossil fuels to wind and solar. It also allows them to use biomass, hydropower, hydrogen, and existing nuclear plants to go carbon-free. Lonnie McCauley reported the Coon Rapids LWV chapter is working with the local Energy Regenerative Committee and lobbying city council members to allow solar panels on community land. Gretchen Sabel is working with MRN in Minnesota to have a presence at the LWVMN state convention the first weekend in June. There will be activities available to allow people to interact with the river. An action will be to write postcards. Lynne Markus is organizing a presentation by Robin Wall Kimmerer a Potawatomi professor and author of Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants.

**Wisconsin:** C. Mahlum-Jenkins reported there are more than 40 communities with excessive PFAS in their systems. Wisconsin does not yet have ground water standards that cover private wells. Community wells are tested. Nancy Hill reported that the La Cross newspaper recommended not eating the fish in the Mississippi River.

**Announcements/Other Discussion Items:** Lynne Markus reported the Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEP) group is setting up speaking engagements. Carolyn Mahlum-Jenkins listened to the presentation about how politics get in the way of environmental agencies. The UMRR-ILO Board agreed to add its name as one of the co-sponsors. Sue Wilson moved and Gretchen Sabel seconded that the UMRR-ILO co-sponsor the Minnesota Climate Change Task Force upcoming informational program which also requires no financial expenditure from UMRR-ILO. Motion carried.

**Next Meeting:** February 20, 2023, at 4:00 pm