

INTER-LEAGUE GROUPS

INTER-LEAGUE GROUPS POSITIONS IN BRIEF

Over the past decade the League of Women Voter of New York State has been involved in the work of two inter-League groups which deal with matters of common concern to more than our state alone: the League of Women Voters Lake Erie Basin Committee and the League of Women Voters of the Tri-State Metropolitan Region. In 1996 the LWV of the Tri-State Metropolitan Region became a committee under LWVNYS.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS LAKE ERIE BASIN COMMITTEE (LEBC)

The LEBC represents and works with state and local Leagues in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York on matters relating to the Great Lakes, in particular to Lake Erie. The purpose of the LEBC is:

To coordinate the activities of the local Leagues of Women Voters in the Lake Erie Basin so that by study, agreement and action in a concerted manner they may have the greatest possible effect on the wise use of the basin's water resources.

POSITION STATEMENT

The goals of the League of Women Voters Lake Erie Basin Committee are:

- To preserve and restore Lake Erie and its tributaries through pollution control, abatement and prevention;
- To improve planning and management of water and related land resources; and
- To achieve the objectives of the 1978 United States-Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

Lake Erie Basin Committee positions by consensus are:

Position on Water Resources and Water Quality

1. Support of public understanding and participation in decision making as essential elements of responsible and responsive management of our natural resources.
2. Support of potable, swimmable, fishable domestic water supply as highest priority use of Lake Erie's water.
 - a. Improved municipal and industrial waste treatment; treatment of all water discharged into the lake from municipal and industrial sources; monitoring water quality; adequate training for operating personnel.
 - b. Control of run-off from community development, agriculture and highway use.
 - c. Prohibition of solid waste disposal in Lake Erie or tributaries.

POSITION STATEMENT (continued)

- 3. Support of improved coordination and regional cooperation between the United States and Canada. Planning and administration along watershed lines and across political boundaries. Modernization and enforcement of legislation and regulations.**
- 4. Support of emphasis on prevention of water pollution from all sources: air, land use, agricultural, dredging, and nuclear and hazardous materials and wastes.**
- 5. Support of education, recognizing that all environmental problems are inter-related, that conservation is an environmental principle and that many jurisdictions are involved—international, national, state and local.**
- 6. Support of adequate financing for pollution abatement, including incentives to governments and industries.**

The natural resources position of the League of Women Voters of the United States calls for promotion of an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest by recognizing the interrelationships of air quality, energy, land use, waste management and water resources.

Position on Phosphate Detergent Ban

1. Support of a ban on phosphorus in home use detergents, for the following reasons:
 - a. Excessive phosphorus loading is a major factor in eutrophication of Lake Erie.
 - b. Nearly all the phosphorus in detergents is biologically available. Addition for clarification: Too great a loading of nutrients into a natural water system can affect all the biota in the system. Increased nutrients result in increased growth of plants, creating dense shade, causing death of vegetation. Additional nutrients will then be released from decomposition of dying plants, encouraging increased growth of algae.
 - c. Costs of phosphorus removal at municipal treatment plants are high.
 - d. Reduction in the amount of sludge improves the treatment process in terms of more efficient settling, sludge disposal and energy conservation.
 - e. Nonphosphate detergents are widely available to the public at comparable cost.

Position on Drilling for Gas and/or Oil in Lake Erie

1. Support of a ban on drilling for gas and oil in Lake Erie for the following reasons:
 - a. Lake Erie's use for drinking water supply must have priority over all other uses.
 - b. Possible economic benefits are offset by inescapable risks of further degradation of water quality in the lake.
 - c. Resolving our nation's energy problem must begin with elimination of waste and over-consumption, more efficient utilization of fuels currently being produced and in the safe, orderly development of alternate energy sources, particularly wind and sun.
 - d. Lake Erie oil and gas reserves ought to be the very last such reserves to be developed.

Nuclear Issues - Power Plants and Radioactive Waste

The Lake Erie Basin Committee will follow the LWVUS guidelines in memorandum sent to all Leagues in the United States dated April 1, 1980.

INTERBASIN TRANSFER OF WATER

Interstate and interbasin transfers of water have been made in the past to serve municipalities, industries, energy development and agriculture. However, approval of those transfers was based on less complete information about their effects on aquatic ecosystems than is now available. It is inevitable that requests for such transfers will be made in the future and will require carefully considered responses.

However,

Construction costs of large-scale water transfers are high and economic losses in the basin of origin may also be high;

Environmental costs of water transfers may include quantitative and qualitative changes in lake levels, wetlands, and related fisheries and wildlife, diminished aquifer recharge, and reduced stream flows;

Lowered water tables may affect ground water quality and cause land subsidence.

Therefore, any diversion plan

Must include an understanding of the fragility and the incomplete knowledge of the ecologic, economic, and social nature of the area of origin, the area through which the water must pass, and the receiving area;

Must contain methods for reviewing and adapting the plan to protect the affected areas during all stages of development, operation, termination, and post-termination of the interbasin transfer.

As we look to the future, water transfer decisions will need to incorporate the high costs of moving water, the limited availability of unallocated water, and impacts on the affected ecosystems.

Criteria for evaluating both the decision-making process and the suitability of a proposed interbasin transfer project should include:

1. Ample and effective opportunities for informed public participation in the formulation and analysis of proposed projects;
2. Evaluation of all economic, social, and environmental impacts in the basin of origin, the receiving area, and any area through which the diversion must pass, so that decision makers and the public have adequate information on which to base their conclusions;
3. Examination of all short- and long-term economic costs including, but not limited to, construction, delivery, operation, maintenance, and market interest rate;
4. Examination of alternatives including, but not limited to, supply options, water conservation, water pricing, and reclamation;
5. Participation and review by all affected governments;
6. Accord with international treaties;

6. Procedures for resolution of intergovernmental conflicts;
7. Responsibility for funding is to be borne primarily by the user with no federal subsidy, loan guarantees or use of the borrowing authority of the federal government unless the proposal is determined by all levels of League to be in the national interest;
8. An enforceable intergovernmental agreement with supervision separate from implementation and with assurances that any mitigation offered to alleviate any adverse impacts be financed;

As the waters of the Great Lakes basin are interconnected, the present and future condition of the Great Lakes' ecosystem should be a primary consideration when weighing the water needs of other areas. The Lake Erie Basin Committee recommends that:

9. Water conservation should be a goal of all concerned governments in the Great Lakes Region;
10. All concerned governments in the Great Lakes region should have water accounting systems and should adopt water use plans as a basis for prudent management of the Great Lakes;
11. Canadian interests must be considered in Great Lakes resource decision-making. At a minimum, existing mechanisms for these international discussions, such as the International Joint Commission, and ad hoc technical task forces should be strengthened;

Criteria for evaluating both the decision-making process and the suitability of a proposed interbasin transfer project should include: (continued)

12. Because the Great Lakes are international, future investment and development in the region should include cooperative United States-Canadian management of the water resource;
13. Since the Great Lakes' waters are currently used for multiple and competing purposes, any proposals for additional diversion decisions must take into account the potential impact on ecological, economic, aesthetic, navigational, energy generation, national security, and general welfare values.

