

## LAKE MICHIGAN LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS



It would be nice to report that the Great Lakes and our dear Lake Michigan are viewed as an extremely valuable resource by the politicians in Washington. And when it comes to budget cuts, we have to remember that Representative Paul Ryan (1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District, Wisconsin) is chair of the appropriations committee. So even someone close to home and representing a district on the shore of Lake Michigan seems to forget the value of this resource and does not work to help its future. An example is the following item from

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/wisconsin/116208064.html>

Great Lakes restoration funding continues to shrink. Funding drops from \$475 million in 2010 to \$225 million this year if the House Appropriations Committee has its way. Obama released his 2012 budget, which includes \$350 million for the restoration program next year.

Conservation groups said all the uncertainty is making it difficult to execute a comprehensive plan to restore the world's largest freshwater system. "There are long-term projects that require some certainty of funding levels from year to year," said Jeff Skelding, campaign director for the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition. "It's put people in limbo, projects in limbo and research in limbo, just awaiting congressional action.

If you attended LMLWV's annual meeting in Manitowoc, you heard Philip Moy. He is an invasive species researcher with the Great Lakes Institute and has worked to gather data from the electric fish barrier in Illinois that is designed to stop the Asian carp from entering Lake Michigan and therefore open the entire Great Lakes system to this voracious feeder. But, what is happening with the barrier.

According to Dan Eagan of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, the Army Corps officials say the public doesn't need to worry about the barrier. According to the Corps, the electric fish barrier is operating at about half its potential voltage on the canal about 35 miles south of Lake Michigan is doing an excellent job of holding the fish back.

The Corps has conducted research on the effectiveness of the barrier. However, they won't share their research even with member, Dr. Moy. You probably remember that he is a member of the government advisory panel created to "assess and evaluate effective methodologies, engineering,

and science-based methods" to keep the carp and other species from migrating up the Chicago canal system.

The barrier was built to operate at a maximum of four volts per fish and that lab testing showed that is enough to keep out the carp, provided they aren't less than 6 inches long. Eagan says "The Army Corps didn't conduct tests with smaller fish because officials don't believe there are any fish that size close to the barrier. Smaller fish have less surface area and therefore it takes a bigger jolt to repel them."

The Corps won't increase the voltage and take other steps but claim such action could pose a danger to barge traffic. It feels that there is no threat from the smaller carp.

When we attended an input meeting held by the Joint Commission in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, most of the people said there was a need to bring the lake level up so they can enjoy boating. The lower level has left many docking facilities too shallow for their boats. Yet, there is a government-funded article circulating on the Internet reports that people living on the Lake Michigan shoreline aren't interested in exploring what it would take to restore the lake to its historical level. This article seems to ignore the input by citizens. In another article by Dan Eagan he says, "Never mind that public hearings around the region concluded months ago there was plenty of interest in having the Canadian and U.S. governments explore how to fix the St. Clair.

So then, what is the future of this resource to Wisconsin? Hopefully our politicians will not turn their backs on us again when it comes to restoring the Great Lakes. Hopefully the economic, recreational and life quality of the Great Lakes will be protected so we continue to have water for drinking, for business, for pleasure.

Marge and Art Palleon, LMLWV Representatives.