2013 Water Actions

1. The US EPA negotiated a consent decree with the owners of the SS Badger, published in March 2013, which allowed the Wisconsin-Michigan ferry to continue to burn coal and dump the ash residue into Lake Michigan for two years. Subsequently, LWVIL joined environmental organizations in April in sending a letter to the Assistant Attorney General asking for a strengthened consent decree, requesting a stepped reduction of ash dumping over the two years and financial penalties for noncompliance. The final consent decree included stronger provisions.

2. The LWVUS continues to oppose construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline. In April, LWVIL joined numerous non-profit groups in sending a letter to the State Department requesting a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement be completed for the tar sands oil pipeline.

3. The June, 2013 LWVIL Convention adopted the Great Lakes Ecosystem position which includes provisions that support the attainment and maintenance of high water quality standards throughout the Great Lakes Basin, with emphasis on water pollution prevention and water conservation.

4. In August, LWVIL submitted comments to the Illinois EPA asking for improvements to strengthen the Midwest Generation Waukegan Generation Plant NPDES water discharge permit. The plant has been called the largest contributor of toxic pollution in all of the Great Lakes.

5. In October, the LWVIL Education Fund learned that its grant proposal for a Stormwater Education Project to be completed in conjunction with the LWV Lake Michigan Region was approved by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Coastal Management Program. Twelve presentations about flooding and nonpoint source pollution will be planned with local Leagues in 2014.

Issue Outlook

In January, 2014, the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) released the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS) of alternative methods and associated costs to prevent the movement of Aquatic Nuisance Species between the two watersheds. Implementation of any of the eight alternatives would be primarily in the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS), and impact communities along the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers as well. The worrisome Asian Carp has been knocking at the door of Lake Michigan for years, and 2014 looks to be the year that Illinoisans confront the issue.
The League of Women Voters of Jo Daviess County has convened a group of citizens interested in studying and protecting their water resources, the Water Protection Partnership. Their efforts will continue this year with a planned water quality monitoring project.

LWVILEF and LWV Lake Michigan Region will complete the Stormwater Education Project working with local Leagues along Illinois’ Lake Michigan Coast, and stormwater and flooding prevention will continue to be at the forefront in many communities across the state. LWVIL will monitor implementation efforts of new stormwater utility efforts.