Issues and Institutions on the Upper Mississippi River

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Upper Mississippi River Basin

- 189,000 square miles
- 1,300 miles in total length
- 850 miles of navigable, interstate waters
- 29 locks & dams for navigation
- Limited ability to regulate flows
- Discharge = 9,200 cfs at St. Paul
  205,000 cfs at Thebes
- Leveed floodplain 3% → 53% → 83%
- 250,000 acres in National Wildlife Refuges
- Congressionally recognized as a nationally significant ecosystem & a nationally significant commercial navigation system

UMRBA Mission

Purpose: Facilitate dialogue and cooperative action on water and related issues in the basin

Focused on:

- Planning & coordination…forum for discussion
- Helping States and Federal agencies work together
- Evaluating policies, programs, and laws
- Building consensus among the States
- Promoting the States' interests

Not involved in:

- Regulation or land management
- Construction or operation of facilities
- Scientific research

Collaboration on the UMR

- Long term commitment—professional organization of the resource managers goes back to 1943
- Approach used for wide range of issues—water quality, ecosystem restoration, navigation, flood risk management, etc.
- Flexible—revisit & revise as needed
- Scalable—e.g., district-based, pool-based, system scale
- Are there issues? Sure!

Trends and Challenges on the Mississippi: *Water Quality*

Tale of Two Watersheds

- **<u>Lake Pepin TMDL</u>: The 1st attempt at a large scale TMDL on the UMR—nutrients and turbidity**
- **<u>Gulf Hypoxia</u>: Exemplifies the challenges of addressing watershed issues in a basin of this scale.**
- **<u>Mississippi River Basin Initiative</u>: USDA's targeted, nutrients-focused initiative offers an important new direction**

Trends and Challenges on the Mississippi: *Navigation*

- **<u>Existing Infrastructure</u>: $$$ needed to maintain current capacity**

- **<u>NESP</u>: Vision for the future—new locks, small scale measures, & ecosystem restoration**

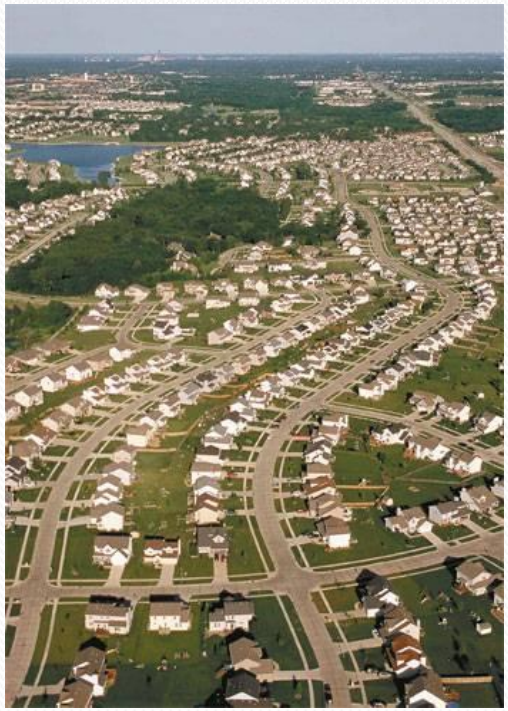
Trends and Challenges on the Mississippi: *Ecosystem Management*

- **<u>Environmental Management Program</u>: 25 years of investment & success**

- **<u>Powerful combination</u>: Ecosystem restoration + monitoring & research**

- **<u>Reach Planning</u>: major, program-neutral look at management objectives on multiple scales**

Trends and Challenges on the Mississippi: *Water Supply and Allocation*



- **<u>Minnesota</u>: Between 1995 and 2005, water use grew 50 percent faster than population**
- **<u>Illinois</u>: Chicago's regional population is projected to increase by 2.8 million people by 2040 (c. 30%)**
- **<u>Aging Systems</u>: Recapitalization is a major issue throughout the region, as it is nationally**

Trends and Challenges on the Mississippi: *Energy Water Nexus*

- **<u>Hydrokinetics</u>: Proposals pose important compatibility & cumulative effects questions**

- **<u>Ethanol Production</u>: Production levels & feedstock choice have important implications**

Trends and Challenges on the Mississippi: *Other Issues*

- **<u>Flood Risk Management</u>: Repeated record precipitation & flood events are giving rise to fundamental questions about our data, models, & policies**
- **<u>Invasive Species</u>: How should the public invest in prevention, control, & adaptation?**
- **<u>Hazardous Spills</u>: What will the BP spill's implications be for planning & prevention on the inland rivers?**
- **<u>Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study</u>: Highlights the interconnectedness of our inland river system**

Opportunities to Move Forward

- Invest in information
- Coordinate and integrate
- Get the institutional piece right
- Establish a vision

Lessons from Our Past…or, “What might these guys say?”

- Challenge to maintain commitment over time
- Operationalizing vision is tough
- States occupy a critical nexus
- Diversity contributes to robustness
- Certain ideas are cyclical
- Extraordinary things can come from collaboration

Thank You