

NEWS NOTES ON SUSTAINABLE WATER RESOURCES

Mississippi River Report Card

<http://www.americaswaterway.org/news/november2015.html>

The [America's Watershed Initiative Mississippi River Health Report Card](#) was disappointing but not unexpected. Like any student who hasn't been doing their homework, there was a sense of doom at grade time. The Report Card confirmed what we sensed; research and stakeholder input from the basins gave the Mississippi River 's overall health a D+ and its infrastructure maintenance an F.

But what now? AWI stressed it will take collaboration throughout the watershed to make improvements. And, it will take [a unified vision for the future of America's great river](#). Could a [National Dialogue](#) - relying on proven collaborative processes and internet-based, simultaneous deliberation – secure the consensus more broadly and quickly? We know key stakeholders are poised to move parts of the report forward. But they will need public awareness and support.

Now is the time to cultivate that awareness and grow that support. A National Dialogue, conducted in representative Basin locations and on-line, can spur that consensus and public awareness. Let's take advantage of the tools of deliberation and decision-making to boost that Mississippi River grade. As every first-grader knows who's had a bad grade, the next report card better read "shows improvement" or there will be worse consequences.

"The economic prosperity and quality of life within the Upper Mississippi River (UMR) region depend upon the river's continuing viability as a rich and diverse ecosystem, a commercial transportation system, a source of water supply, and a recreational resource." With this statement, the [Upper Mississippi River Basin Association](#) revealed the findings of a [year-long study](#) – matched to one conducted earlier in the Lower Mississippi River – to establish a benchmark of the River's economic importance.

Findings included:

- UMR corridor generates \$253 billion annually
- UMR corridor supports 755,000 jobs
- Manufacturing, tourism and agriculture account for over 93 percent of revenue and 92 percent of total employment
- Tourism and outdoor recreation = approximately 300,000 jobs

More information can be found at www.umrba.org.