



Upper
Mississippi River
Basin Association

ILLINOIS, IOWA, MINNESOTA, MISSOURI, WISCONSIN

March 10, 2005

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
U.S. Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-6175

The Honorable James Jeffords
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
U.S. Senate
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-6175

The Honorable Don Young
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James Oberstar
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Inhofe, Senator Jeffords, Representative Young, and Representative Oberstar:

As Congress formulates a Water Resources Development Act, we urge you to include authorization of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' proposed "dual purpose integrated plan" for navigation improvements and ecosystem restoration on the Upper Mississippi River. After 12 years, the feasibility study upon which this plan is based is finally complete. It is now time to move forward with authorization and funding for these much needed improvements.

Our region's prosperity and quality of life depend upon the Mississippi River's continuing viability as a commercial transportation system, a rich and diverse ecosystem, a source of water supply, and a recreational resource. Thus, we, the Governors of States bordering the Upper Mississippi River, are committed to the principles of sustainability and multi-purpose use as the foundation of Upper Mississippi River management.

Consistent with these principles, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has developed a "dual purpose integrated plan" to guide its management responsibilities on the Upper Mississippi River over the next 50 years. As Governors of the five states that share stewardship of this nationally significant resource with the federal government, we jointly endorse the Corps of Engineers' proposed Plan, as set forth in the September 24, 2004 Final Integrated Feasibility Report and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the UMR-IWW System Navigation Feasibility Study. In particular, we support:

- Navigation improvements, including mooring facilities, switchboats, seven new locks, and related mitigation, within the framework of a \$2.4 billion plan, with an initial investment totaling \$1.671 billion and further investments contingent upon an updated feasibility report.
- Ecosystem restoration actions, including island building, fish passage at dams, floodplain restoration, water level management, backwater and side channel restoration, wing dam and dike alterations, island and shoreline protection, improvements to topographic diversity, and switching to dam point control, within the framework of a \$5.3 billion 50-year plan, with an initial investment increment of \$1.462 billion.

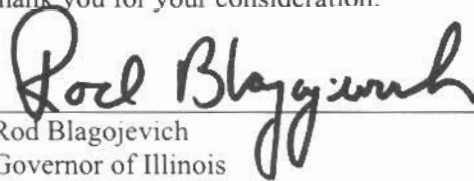
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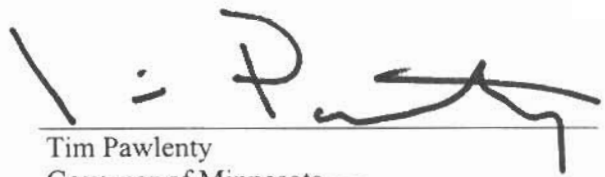
Senator James Inhofe
Senator James Jeffords
Representative Don Young
Representative James Oberstar
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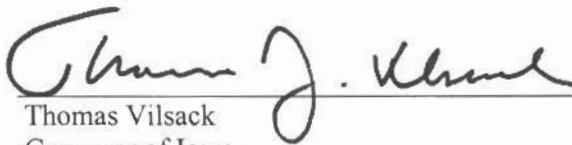
We believe that implementation of these recommendations must be integrated, balanced, adaptive, collaborative, and fairly funded. Thus, the authorizing legislation should reflect the following:

- Ecosystem restoration should be added as a federally authorized project purpose on the Upper Mississippi River, thus providing a dual authority and mandating integrated planning and management by the Corps of Engineers.
- Ecosystem restoration and navigation improvements should move forward in tandem, so that measurable and substantial progress can be made toward both goals.
- The long-term (50-year) Plan should be implemented incrementally and adaptively to accommodate dynamic natural and economic conditions, risk and uncertainty, and future advances in technology. This will require developing new economic and ecological models, in addition to monitoring ecological processes, river traffic, and market conditions. However, imperfect information should not keep us from moving forward now, with a reasonable and flexible plan for the future. In particular, evaluation reports and checkpoints in the first 15 years will be critical in defining the scope of future investments.
- The Corps of Engineers must implement the Plan in collaboration with the basin states and other federal agencies having river-related responsibilities. Consultation and coordination on scientific, technical, and policy issues should utilize existing institutions, adapting them as necessary, but avoiding the establishment of new and potentially redundant bureaucracies.
- Consistent with existing law, half the costs of the navigation improvements must be borne by the commercial navigation industry through the Inland Waterway Trust Fund. Cost-sharing of ecosystem restoration must recognize the Federal government's unique responsibility on the Upper Mississippi River. In particular, the Federal government's construction, operation, and maintenance of the navigation system has had long-term cumulative environmental effects. Moreover, the Federal government is the largest single floodplain landowner, including over 285,000 acres of national refuges along the river system. While our states are willing to share a portion of the ecosystem restoration costs, the following ecosystem restoration costs must be fully federally funded: modifications to navigation structures or operations, measures on Corps project lands or national refuges, and measures in the main channel or directly connected backwaters below the ordinary high water mark.

Thank you for your consideration.


Rod Blagojevich
Governor of Illinois


Tim Pawlenty
Governor of Minnesota


Thomas Vilsack
Governor of Iowa


Matt Blunt
Governor of Missouri


Jim Doyle
Governor of Wisconsin