



Upper  
Mississippi River  
Basin Association

ILLINOIS, IOWA, MINNESOTA, MISSOURI, WISCONSIN

January 11, 2017

The Honorable Mike Pence  
Vice President-Elect  
1717 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Mr. Vice President-Elect:

On behalf of the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA), I write to congratulate you on your election and offer our five member states' Upper Mississippi River System (Upper Mississippi) priorities for your consideration during the transition to President-Elect Trump's Administration.

Formed by the Governors of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin in 1981, UMRBA represents its member states' common water resource interests and works collaboratively with state and federal agencies, the navigation industry, environmental organizations, local communities, and others who have a role in maintaining the Upper Mississippi's viability as a key transportation corridor and dynamic ecosystem that is a fundamental driver of the nation's economy. Counties along the Upper Mississippi generate more than \$345 billion in revenue annually and support over one million jobs in river-dependent sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, recreation, tourism, energy production, and commercial navigation.

Our states are strongly committed to balanced, sustainable, multi-use management of the river so that success in the variety of river-dependent sectors can be continued and expanded. Enclosed, we respectfully submit for your consideration the UMR states' recommendations for maintaining a healthy, vital Mississippi River that supports the local, regional, and national economy. These recommendations emphasize:

- **Modernizing and repairing the Upper Mississippi's waterway infrastructure**, to optimize the nation's freight transportation system, decrease export and import shipping costs, and keep America competitive in an ever-growing and ever-changing domestic and international market.
- **Enhancing capabilities to better predict flood events and minimize their damage**, while also addressing sediment impacts on the river's shipping channel.
- **Protecting and improving the river's water quality and ecological health** to ensure clean drinking water, thriving fish and wildlife populations, an attractive international tourist destination, and world-class hunting, fishing, and recreation experiences.

The Upper Mississippi States are eager to work with your Administration to advance our mutual priorities. Please contact me or UMRBA's Executive Director Dru Buntin at 651-224-2880 to set up an opportunity to discuss our recommendations in more detail.

Sincerely,

Robert Stout  
Chair  
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

cc: Upper Mississippi Delegation Members

# **Priority Recommendations for a Thriving, Multiple-Use Upper Mississippi River**

**January 2017**



**Upper Mississippi River Basin Association**

**415 Hamm Building**

**408 St. Peter Street**

**St. Paul, Minnesota 55102**

**651-224-2880**

**[www.umrba.org](http://www.umrba.org)**

## **Improve Infrastructure for a Modern, Reliable, and Efficient Commercial Navigation System**

The Upper Mississippi River System is a vital component of the nation's economy, connecting inland states to the world economy while also relieving congestion on roads and railways. Lack of infrastructure investment on the Upper Mississippi has left us with an outdated and deteriorating system that risks catastrophic failure if left unaddressed. Because most of the Upper Mississippi locks only have one chamber, a failure completely disrupts the entire system. For example, a one-year closure of Lock and Dam 25 would result in a loss of more than 7,000 jobs, \$1.3 billion of labor income, and approximately \$2.4 billion of economic activity in the corn and soybean industry alone. Such losses can be avoided by constructing a second, 1,200-foot chamber at key locks as authorized by Congress in 2007 in the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP). These improvements would substantially lower transportation costs by increasing the system's reliability and efficiency, eliminating or minimizing safety risks, and stimulating market opportunities.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Maintain system integrity and respond to modern shipping needs by strategically investing to construct a second, modern sized chamber at the seven most congested locks on the Upper Mississippi via the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP).** The preferred sequence is to start with Lock 25 on the Upper Mississippi River and La Grange Lock on the Illinois River, and then proceed to address the other five locks – 20, 21, 22, 24 on the Upper Mississippi and Peoria on the Illinois River. NESP also provides for comparable progress in riverine ecosystem restoration, building from the successful Upper Mississippi River Restoration program described later in this document.
- **Avoid catastrophic failure of the commercial navigation system, by undertaking major rehabilitation of the existing La Grange Lock.** Fully matching industry cost share available in the Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF) is needed to efficiently complete this project. The La Grange Lock is in dire need of rehabilitation and is consistently rated as one of the most degraded locks in the country with the greatest risk of failure.
- **Address immediate dredging and sediment disposal management needs by funding the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Upper Mississippi District's operations and maintenance budgets,** ensuring that the Upper Mississippi can reliably and efficiently transport the Midwest's exports and imports.
- **Strengthen the Upper Mississippi's freight mobility, promote its increased utilization as an international trade corridor, and seamlessly integrate the river into the national freight transportation system** by robustly funding the U.S. Department of Transportation's America's Marine Highway Program.

## **Enhance Capabilities to Address Flooding and Sediment Impacts**

The social, economic, and environmental consequences of flood response, recovery, and mitigation decisions can be profound. So, too, are the consequences of frequent and often times emergency sediment-related closures of the navigation system that disrupt global trading routes. Developing a comprehensive understanding of water and sediment movement throughout the Upper Mississippi watershed via an integrated planning process is necessary in order to enhance the resilience of river communities and floodplain farmers to flooding and drought, while also improving our ability to predict and plan for future dredging of the navigation channel.

### **Recommendation:**

- **Develop an integrated, comprehensive, and systems-based approach to flood risk reduction and channel maintenance management** by supporting a comprehensive evaluation of water and sediment movement throughout the Upper Mississippi's watershed to the main stem.

## Protect Water Quality and Improve Ecological Health

Protecting water quality is essential for people and communities in the Upper Mississippi basin. They rely on clean water for drinking, as well as for their businesses, industries and farms. Clean water is also essential to the river ecosystem which in turn supports tourism, hunting, fishing, and other recreation. In short, a healthy, clean Mississippi River is central to the success of river communities, our states, and the upper Midwest. However, decaying infrastructure threatens the security of water supplies, sediment is filling in wetland habitats, nutrients are impairing water quality, and invasive species are harming native fish and wildlife. Also, while the vast majority of fuel and hazardous materials shipments reach their destination without incident, a major spill could impact both water quality and ecosystem health. Therefore, maintaining a healthy, clean Upper Mississippi requires restoring the ecosystem, addressing aging infrastructure, reducing nutrient loading, controlling invasive species, and planning for potential spills. It also requires monitoring and science to help us understand the system, measure progress, and choose the most effective future actions.

### Recommendations:

- **Restore and enhance critical ecosystem functions by fully funding the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Upper Mississippi River Restoration (UMRR) program at its authorized level of \$33.17 million.** This program restores the natural infrastructure needed for the Upper Mississippi to function as a healthy large-river ecosystem and provides the sound science that is necessary to address the causes of ecosystem degradation.
- **Modernize water infrastructure through the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Funds (SRFs), and the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program.** WIFIA implementation, alongside enhanced SRF resources, will be invaluable in modernizing our aging, inadequate water infrastructure so that the nation can continue to enjoy safe and reliable water supplies.
- **Alleviate nutrient impacts on water sources by providing federal investment to advance the states' nutrient loss reduction strategies.** Specifically, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service programs and Clean Water Act Section 319 grants promote voluntary implementation of best practices that mutually benefit water quality, soil health, and agricultural production.
- **Improve understanding of current conditions, better predict adverse events, and measure progress** by maintaining and enhancing critical monitoring systems. These include USGS gage, water quality, and continuous monitoring networks, as well as states' Clean Water Act Section 106 water quality sampling programs. These monitoring systems are essential for predicting and monitoring flood events, understanding water quality changes, and responding to emerging issues.
- **Reduce the risk of Asian carp and other invasive species passing through the Chicago Area Waterways System through effective, affordable and safe prevention and control methods,** while also considering the potential impacts to other waterway uses.
- **Improve spill response readiness and training** by implementing the Railroad Emergency Services Preparedness, Operational Needs and Safety Evaluation (RESPONSE) Act of 2016 and continuing to develop essential preparedness tools for responders via USEPA's Inland Oil Spill and Superfund programs.