



Upper Mississippi River Basin Association Meeting of the Water Quality Task Force

January 22, 2025

**Agenda
with
Background
and
Supporting Materials**

Upper Mississippi River Basin Association Water Quality Task Force

January 22, 2025

Agenda

Remote Connection:

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Zoom registration link: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/yl_-o32DT0yAa-m9eKWWtg

Wednesday, January 22

Time	Attachment	Topic	Presenter
12:00 noon		Welcome and Introductions	<i>Kim Laing, Minnesota PCA</i>
12:05	A1-A7	Approval of the September 25-26, 2024 WQEC-WQTF Draft Meeting Summary	
12:10	B1-B5	UMRBA Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UMRBA Board-WQEC November 18, 2024 Meeting• USEPA Exchange Network Grant• FY 2025 UMRBA Water Quality Program Workplan	<i>Lauren Salvato, UMRBA</i>
12:30		Updating Minnesota's Large River Macroinvertebrate Index of Biotic Integrity	<i>Joel Chirhart, Minnesota PCA</i>
1:00		States Implementation of Clean Water Act <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 303(d) and 305(b) Lists• TMDLs in the Upper Mississippi River Basin	<i>All</i>
1:20		Communication and Engagement in UMRBA's Water Quality Program Elements: Monitoring, HABs, and Chloride	<i>All</i>
1:40		Meeting Close-Out Discussion: Remaining Questions and Perspectives	<i>All</i>
1:50		Summary and Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Future Meeting Schedule	<i>All</i>
2:00 p.m.		Adjourn	

ATTACHMENT A

September 25-26, 2024 Joint Meeting of the Water Quality Executive Committee and Water Quality Task Force Draft Summary

(A-1 to A-7)

**Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Water Quality Executive Committee
and Water Quality Task Force Joint Meeting**

**September 25-26, 2024
Draft Highlights and Action Items Summary**

September 25, 2024

Approval of the WQTF February 1, 2024 Meeting Summary

The UMRBA Water Quality Executive Committee (WQEC) and UMRBA Water Quality Task Force (WQTF) approved the February 1, 2024 draft highlights and action items summary.

UMRBA Update

Josh Wolf introduced himself as the new Water Quality Coordinator at UMRBA. He detailed his role in the Upper Mississippi River nutrient reduction strategy and the Hypoxia Task Force.

UMRBA Water Quality Program

Lauren Salvato reviewed the [UMRBA 2022-2035 Water Quality Program Plan](#), which outlines a vision and long-term plan for improving water quality conditions on the Upper Mississippi River System through interstate cooperative management. During 2023, the WQEC and WQTF had discussions on how to focus work over the next two fiscal years. Those included: partial implementation of an Upper Mississippi River (UMR) Interstate Water Quality Monitoring Plan from October 2025 to September 2026; management of water quality monitoring data generated from implementation of the Monitoring Plan; the Upper Mississippi River Nutrient Reduction Strategy project, primarily funded by the Gulf Hypoxia program; shared water quality assessments and standards for the Upper Mississippi River; a public use survey across the Upper Mississippi River to understand perceptions of water quality and other uses of the river; and building work plans or statements for emerging contaminants and nitrogen. Salvato suggested pivoting away from the focus on shared water quality assessments and standards, the public use survey, and the workplan statements and instead focus on harmful algal blooms and chloride.

Water Quality Executive Committee Charter

Kirsten Wallace noted that the UMRBA Board established the WQEC in 2006 for the purposes of facilitating collaborative decision-making, cooperative action, and information sharing among the five upper basin states and to provide a policy link between collective actions and individual actions by the states and federal government.

In 2021, the WQEC finalized the 2022-2035 UMRBA Water Quality Program Plan. The Committee agreed to revisit the Charter to ensure its relevance to the Plan.

UMRBA's water quality program has slowly and deliberately grown since 2006. Over the past five years, the states' vision for UMRBA's water quality work has grown substantially.

The WQEC convened a few focused conversations on the existing Charter's terms and reflected on the 10-Year Program Plan's trajectory of growth in UMRBA's water quality program. Areas of focus and direction have included:

- Purpose, membership, scope, roles, and responsibilities. These sections were edited to be more reflective of today's language but remain largely the same as the original/existing Charter.
- Potential expansion of membership of federal agencies beyond USEPA – e.g., USGS, NRCS. The WQEC agreed to maintain only USEPA as a non-voting member, but to invite the participation of other federal agencies to the public meetings and any non-public meetings as appropriate.
- Appropriate annual meeting cycle (frequency and location). The WQEC agreed to convene three meetings per year. One meeting per year is to be held jointly with the UMRBA Board and one meeting per year is to be held jointly with its designated committees or work groups.
- Assigned interstate collaborations. The Committee debated the potential of assigning standing or ad hoc interstate collaborations. While the Committee recognizes the growing need for interstate collaboration on a variety of topics (e.g., nutrients, HABs, chloride), the Committee was not prepared to name the potential organizational bodies in the Charter. The Committee wanted to wait until UMRBA has the organizational capacity to support any new interstate collaboration and until the work was more refined and specific. With that direction, UMRBA staff propose transferring from a focus on the WQTF to a more open and flexible approach – i.e., “Establish standing committees and/or working groups to advance priorities of the WQEC...”

Wallace discussed how updating the Charter language each year can help clarify WQEC's role when Water Quality dues assessments are billed to the five states. Adam Schnieders agreed that would be helpful and requested more clarity on the UMRBA Board's priorities. Brian Stenquist reinforced that there is a deliberate connection between the UMRBA Board and the WQEC as the Water Quality program plan was endorsed and approved by the UMRBA Board. In reviewing specific changes to the Charter language, Glenn Skuta stated that he was in support of the more succinct revised statement regarding the individual authorities of each state but requested that some language from the original wording be retained (“actions taken by the WQEC are not binding on any agency unless the agencies explicitly enter into a binding agreement”).

In response to a question from Skuta about additional background on the naming change from Water Quality Executive Committee to Water Quality Executive Council, Wallace explained that there are many UMRBA committees and wants to ensure the naming is reflective of the WQEC's role as a body focused on policy, budget, and strategic direction, which is more suited to a Council.

Skuta reflected on next steps for finalizing the WQEC Charter:

- Coordinate with Missouri and Illinois WQEC representatives individually on Charter changes
- Present the updated Charter draft to the UMRBA Board and WQEC at its upcoming November 18, 2024 meeting for endorsement

UMRBA Nutrient Work

Salvato described the Upper Mississippi River (UMR) Nutrient Reduction Strategy (NRS) Project, which includes the development of an interstate UMR NRS, an adaptive management and continuous learning framework, and a communications plan. As this project is starting, Salvato also requested dialogue on the work of the nutrient committee and how that committee will collaborate with the UMRBA Board, WQEC, and WQTF. Salvato suggested that the Nutrient Committee include state NRS coordinators. Their functions would be to develop a scope for the UMR NRS, participate in the project, connect expertise and review within and among state agencies, and advocate for the implementation of workplan components. Her estimation is that this would take 2.5 % of each representative's time. If any requests from UMRBA consume too many resources, UMRBA can shift its priorities accordingly. More functions not necessarily tied to Gulf Hypoxia program funding could be other interstate nutrient needs, such as serving as a forum, and developing advocacy. A potential approach for the UMR NRS development would be to review the five state NRSs, host individual conversations with the NRS coordinators, and then outline a skeleton draft. UMRBA would then convene the Nutrient Committee to review iterations of the UMR NRS

Skuta asked if states were ready to name representatives to the Nutrient Committee. Skuta nominated Corrie Layfield, Minnesota's Nutrient Reduction Strategy Coordinator. Adam Schnieders suggested that he and Matt Lechtenberg from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship can be involved, with the potential to include Iowa State University. Adrian Stocks suggested Karl Gesch as the representative for Wisconsin. Gesch agreed he would like to be involved but would have to discuss this request with his supervisor, adding that the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection will likely nominate the staff person that is taking over the liaison position, formerly held by Coreen Fallat. Illinois and Missouri both have additional internal coordination before naming a representative.

Stenquist asked how success would be defined for the UMR NRS. Schnieders defined success as a meaningful action or project being implemented on the landscape. He added that a shared agreement to increase wetlands in the UMR watershed could be a good starting point for collaboration. Skuta reinforced that no one wants to see a document created that just sits on a shelf. Stenquist said he defines success as identifying a leverage point, or small changes that can result in bigger, cascading changes.

Wallace suggested that the Nutrient Committee can have additional interstate functions, not necessarily funded by the Gulf Hypoxia Program. For example, an opportunity for the Nutrient Committee to interact with UMRBA's ecosystem program is through nutrient cycling in the context of flooding and drought. Congress is considering a systemic flood authority in the 2024 Water Resources Development Act. If the language is included, Wallace suggests future conversations on the roles of nutrients and water quality in floodplain reconnection through flood risk reduction with nature-based solutions and environmental sustainability. Schnieders agreed with Wallace that floodplain reconnection is a benefit to nutrient loading reduction, particularly because floodplain reconnection has the potential to increase denitrification.

Communications and Public Participation in UMRBA's Water Quality Program

Stenquist shared that UMRBA will be working on interstate communication and public participation organization-wide, including as a work product specified in the UMR nutrient reduction strategy project. Stenquist asked participants to reflect on three questions to help UMRBA formulate its potential interstate communication approaches:

1. What are three messages your organization has tried to deliver about water quality in the Mississippi River over the last two years?
2. What audiences were those messages intended to reach?
3. What communication vehicles (e.g. web, news article, speech) did your organization use to send the messages to the intended audiences?

Kim Laing shared news articles to highlight the communications approaches Minnesota PCA used to announce its plans for water quality and PFAS monitoring conducted on the Mississippi River during summer 2024.

Skuta mentioned MPCA's reissuing of feedlot permits and how, different from previous years, MPCA staff conducted more advanced communication and engagement with permittees. He explained that the work MPCA does is often controversial and should provide for more involvement and engagement with the public. Skuta then described MPCA messaging shifts around the impaired waters list. Past communications focused on the number of existing problems and how much work needed to be done. Communications surrounding the list were shifted to more positive reporting, with the crafting of messaging around good things happening and concrete examples of success stories while continuing to highlight challenges. Skuta also remarked that in the past 10 years, public perception around the NRS has changed dramatically and that MPCA now has a dedicated communications strategist for this work.

Owen Gallagher provided an example of stakeholder engagement. Missouri DNR staff met with its stakeholders for three years before proposing new wastewater treatment phosphorus discharge rules.

Schnieders expressed the challenge of trying to explain water quality to the public, particularly with the impaired waters list. Iowa DNR held a press conference in advance of the release of the impaired waters list to be able to gain more control of the narrative. This approach had limited success due to a lack of engagement by the press and was ultimately discontinued.

Stenquist asked what audiences UMRBA should be thinking about when working on the UMR NRS. Schnieders recommended focusing on the 'doers', the people that would be actively participating in implementation of conservation.

Gesch stated that Wisconsin recognizes the importance of communication needs going forward with its NRS but does not have a dedicated communications person. Tim Asplund shared that DNR staff were surveyed about ways to improve Wisconsin NRS and one of the takeaways was increasing the collaboration across program areas.

Stenquist asked participants when their individual NRSs would be updated. Skuta stated that Minnesota's NRS release is anticipated in fall 2025. Minnesota's plan will have a higher level of detail while deemphasizing areas of the plan that have not been utilized. Gesch said that Wisconsin is updating its plan on a similar timeline to Minnesota. Schnieders said Iowa would be updating its NRS by the end of the calendar year 2025. Gallagher said the 10-year anniversary of the Missouri NRS is approaching, and on October 25, 2024, Missouri is hosting a public meeting to reflect on its accomplishments. No official timeline has been developed for the NRS rewrite. Kent Johnson shared that Illinois recently finished its biennial report and has not yet made plans for rewriting its NRS. Wallace asked participants to think about the ways UMRBA can support the states in their NRS and monitoring programs.

September 26, 2024

Using a Nutrient Lens to look at the Midwest Conservation Blueprint

Alex Wright introduced the Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI). The MLI is a collaborative of conservation partners engaged in the Midwest and a formal committee of the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The MLI identified the need for a Midwest Conservation Blueprint as a synthesis tool used to identify priority networks of lands and waters that support thriving healthy lands to support ecosystem and wildlife. The Blueprint consists of datasets such as the US Forest Service's Forests 2 Faucets drinking water layer, federal threatened and endangered species, and The Nature Conservancy's climate resiliency data layer. The datasets overlap help reveal the zones of highest conservation priority. MLI's additional functions include connecting partners to work across boundaries, facilitating collaborative efforts, and supporting grant proposals. MLI can support grant proposals with letters of support, assisting with grant proposals, and in the application of the Blueprint. Wright confirmed some limitations of the Blueprint as the Forests 2 Faucets layer does not include groundwater. He suggested using the public feedback tool to include ground water as MLI evaluates the tool and potential upgrades each year. Additionally, the Blueprint zones are also skewed towards those areas already healthy and connected. The 2024 version will be released in a few weeks and will include carbon sequestration potential. Future updates to the Blueprint include updated information after state wildlife action plans are revised in 2025.

USGS Integrated Water Availability Assessments

Lori Sprague with USGS presented *USGS Integrated Water Availability Assessments* looking jointly at quality, quantity, and use. The three outcomes of this project are: National Water Availability Assessments, Regional Water Availability Assessments, and Water Availability Model Delivery. The USGS is looking at the balance between supply and demand and focusing on areas where demand comes close to or exceeds supply. Albert Ettinger expressed concern about dropped monitoring sites. Sprague sympathized with the concern and explained that the removal of monitoring sites is funding dependent. UMRBA is in partnership with USGS and the University of Minnesota to do a water availability assessment, which was recently approved and will move forward. Wallace thanked Sprague for her cooperation on the project.

Producing Cover Crop Seed for Public Lands Benefiting Water Quality and Wildlife

Schnieders and Justin Clark presented on the Iowa DNR Cover Crop Seed Production Project. The Iowa NRS team saw an opportunity to better utilize conservation practices listed in its NRS and expanded the use of cover crops for multiple benefits. Iowa DNR manages 500,000 acres of public land and 29,000 acres are in use as row crop agriculture. With a Farmer-to-Farmer grant, Iowa DNR produced seeds for row crops and public grounds to protect Iowa's waters and wildlife. For five seasons, nearly a million pounds of rye and triticale seeds were produced over 7,000 acres of row crop and public grounds. In the process DNR created dozens of partnerships with cooperating farmers and saved hundreds of thousands of dollars by doing this themselves.

UMRBA Water Quality Program Workplan

Salvato presented the UMRBA's draft water quality workplan components for fiscal years 2025 to 2027:

- Monitoring and data management
- Nutrient reduction
- Harmful algal blooms
- Chloride

Key components: communications, public participation, and environmental justice

For the monitoring and data management piece, the planning for the fixed site implementation of the UMR Interstate Water Quality Program is underway. UMRBA, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, was recently awarded a USEPA Exchange Network grant to build a database management system for its water resource data. The nutrient reduction item is also underway as previously discussed. For harmful algal blooms, Salvato suggested expanding UMRBA's role in interstate collaboration beyond the HAB Resource Response Manual. In August and September, Salvato was involved in conversations with Illinois American Water regarding algal bloom conditions in the Alton, Illinois area. The experience coordinating across partners revealed a few themes: 1) algal toxin monitoring and event-based response for suspected cyanotoxin blooms are not consistently implemented across the Upper Mississippi River, and 2) improved coordination and partnerships can help better address response timing to suspected cyanotoxin conditions. There are many potential actions that UMRBA can take but Salvato suggested further developing a gap analysis and a discussion with the UMRBA Board and WQEC during its upcoming November 18, 2024, meeting. Additional suggestions around HABs included looking at the potential of satellite data in HAB prediction and utilizing Wisconsin's guidance for swimming advisories, as neither Wisconsin nor Minnesota has public water supply intakes on the UMR.

For the chloride work item, Salvato discussed scoping what implementation of the UMRBA Chloride Resolution would be.

Shawn Giblin suggested looking at the Wisconsin workgroup's chloride recommendations for overlapping opportunities. Schnieders recommended planning for joint press releases with environmental regulatory agencies and departments of transportation in advance of Winter Salt Awareness Week in January 2025. Voss suggested Congressional action around limited liability would be most impactful to reduce chloride

loading. Wallace said staff can work on a limited liability issue assessment to understand the sensitivities around this topic.

Administrative Items

Future Meeting

The UMRBA Board will meet jointly with the WQEC in Alton, Illinois on November 18 and 19, 2024. Salvato reminded participants that the virtual WQTF winter meeting is typically late January and that the WQEC recently added a virtual March meeting. Salvato will send out a Doodle poll to schedule both meetings.

Participants

Kent Johnson	Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Alex Terlep	Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Dan Kendall	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Adam Schnieders	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Reid Christianson	Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Heather Johnson	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Kim Laing	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Glenn Skuta	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Justin Watkins	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Owen Gallagher	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Robert Voss	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Micah Bennett	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Alia Kirsch	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Janette Marsh	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Megan Rebechini	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Paul Walkup	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Dane Boring	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7
Lauren Salvato	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Brian Stenquist	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Kirsten Wallace	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Josh Wolf	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Tim Anderson	Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection
Tim Asplund	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Karl Gesch	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Shawn Giblin	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Gina Laliberte	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Adrian Stocks	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Alex Wright	US Fish and Wildlife Service
David Dupre	US Geological Survey
Lori Sprague	US Geological Survey
Albert Ettinger	Mississippi River Collaborative

ATTACHMENT B

UMRBA Water Quality Program Updates

- 1) Fiscal Year 2024 Year in Review and Fiscal Year 2025 Outlook
- 2) Upper Mississippi River Nutrient Reduction Strategy Plan for Fiscal Year 2025
- 3) UMRBA Water Quality Program 2025 Work Plan Overview

(B-1 to B-5)

Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

Water Quality Program



Mission: Clean water in the Upper Mississippi River System watershed, floodplain, and mainstem provides the foundation for a healthy ecosystem that is beneficial for people, fish, and wildlife.

Fiscal Year 2024 Year in Review

The Upper Mississippi River Basin Association focused on cooperative action, collaborative problem solving and communication across all five of its goals listed in its 2022–2035 Water Quality Program Plan.

Some Fiscal Year 2024 Accomplishments:

- Published the How Clean is the River? report and communicated the water quality trend information to UMRBA partners and river stakeholders
- Convened nutrient management leaders who collectively identified and mapped leverage points for accelerating the use of multi-benefit conservation practices
- Facilitated information exchange, and explored interstate collaboration, on the batch-and-build approach for implementing conservation practices that has been successful in Iowa
- Planned for implementation of fixed site sampling under the UMR Interstate Water Quality Monitoring Plan, starting in fall 2025, including assisting states with their financial applications and securing partnerships with USEPA
- In partnership with Illinois Department of Natural Resources, successfully applied for a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Exchange Network grant to build a database management program for UMRBA's water resources data
- Participated in the Hypoxia Task Force Coordinating Committee and communications workgroup as the UMR Sub-Basin Committee
- Represented UMRBA in numerous meetings, such as USEPA's Nonpoint Source Workshop, the Missouri Water Protection Forum, Iowa's Water Resources Coordinating Council, the Soil and Water Conservation Society Annual Meeting, and the Environmental Defense Fund's Nature Based Solutions Workshop



Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

Water Quality Program



Fiscal Year 2025 Outlook

Priority Activities in Fiscal Year 2025:

- Continue preparing to initiate fixed site sampling under the UMR Interstate Water Quality Monitoring Plan, starting in fall 2025, ensuring consistent split-site monitoring and developing a risk communication strategy
- Design database to house and analyze water quality monitoring data
- Form a Nutrient Reduction Committee and draft the Upper Mississippi River Nutrient Reduction Strategy Plan
- Develop a multi-year approach to advance interstate cooperation related to chloride runoff reduction, implementing the UMRBA Chloride Resolution
- Develop a multi-year approach to improve multi-state cooperation of harmful algal bloom mitigation and response on the Upper Mississippi River, including in partnership with public water suppliers – e.g., employ a gap analysis of capacity and tools

Staff Contacts: Lauren Salvato, Water Quality Program Leader (lsalvato@umrba.org) and Josh Wolf, Water Quality Program Coordinator (jwolf@umrba.org)



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**UPPER MISSISSIPPI NUTRIENT REDUCTION STRATEGY PLAN (UMNRS PLAN)
DRAFT FY 2025 WORK PLAN**

For discussion with Water Quality Executive Council and UMRBA Board – November 18, 2024

UMRBA staff commitment: Josh Wolf (lead); Lauren Salvato, Brian Stenquist, Kirsten Wallace (support)

Year 1: Draft a version of the UMNRS Plan to be used for public review

Year 2: Use draft version for public review and comment

December 2024:

Committee Formation and Discovery

Action 1: Form the committee responsible for reviewing and refining the UMNRS Plan and complete document discovery and research.

Week 1 Tasks:

Review and finalize the purpose and scope of the committee.

Confirm committee members from each state and external organization.

Begin NRS document review.

Week 2 Tasks:

Communicate finalized committee composition and distribute kick-off email explaining expectations, roles, and responsibilities.

Complete NRS document review.

Week 3-4 Tasks:

Discuss timeline and milestones for drafting and review.

Review cross-referencing documents and begin to compile UMNRS comparison document.

January 2025 to February 2025:

Initial Draft Version*

Document Drafting

Action 1: Draft the initial version of the UMNRS Plan.

Weeks 1-4 Tasks:

Conduct initial research and outline each section.

Begin initial draft.

Work with partners to gain additional insights and leverage most current and accurate information.

Weeks 4-8 Tasks:

Review individual sections for consistency and alignment with objectives (w/ Lauren, Brian, Kirsten).

Complete revisions and submit for additional review.

Compile cohesive draft document for initial internal review (w/ Lauren, Brian, Kirsten).

March 2025 to April 2025:

Document Review & Editing

Action 1: Edit, review, and finalize the initial draft of the UMNRS Plan.

March 2025:

Initial Committee Review

Week 1-4 Tasks:

Provide initial draft to committee for review (1 month for initial committee review).

Identify areas requiring major revisions or additional input.

April 2025:

Initial Edits

Week 1-4 Tasks:

Make revisions based on committee feedback.

Share revised draft with the committee for feedback on specific revisions (3 weeks for committee review)

May 2025:

Second Review & Refinement of the Initial Draft Version*

Week 1-2 Tasks:

Collect second round of committee feedback.

Review and refine sections with conflicting feedback or outstanding issues.

Week 3-4 Tasks:

Hold a meeting with the committee to resolve any outstanding challenges.

Incorporate feedback and refine the document further.

June 2025: Final Review and Approval of the Initial Draft Version*

Week 1-2 Tasks:

Share the near-final draft with the committee for final review.

Collect final feedback and make final revisions.

Week 3-4 Tasks:

Schedule a final approval meeting with the committee.

Finalize the document and obtain approval for publication or dissemination.

* UMNRS Plan communications and public participation planning will recognize the importance of state-based communications and public participation and will coordinate with state agency communications and public participation processes.

Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

Water Quality Program

2025 Work Plan Overview

Purpose: Below is a draft set of work plan priorities for the UMRBA Water Quality Program. During the November 18, 2024 joint meeting, the UMRBA Board and Water Quality Executive Committee will confirm actions they believe will be important to the Program’s implementation in 2025, suggest refinements, or direct changes to either drop or postpone activities. UMRBA staff organized this set of activities based on the UMRBA 2022-2035 Water Quality Program Plan and in light of the Water Quality Executive Committee’s discussion during its September 2024 meeting.

Draft Actions

Funding Source

I) Interstate Water Quality Monitoring Program

- a) Develop a database to house and analyze water quality monitoring data

Exchange Network Grant

- Enter into a subaward agreement with Illinois DNR
- Design and implement a strategy to meet the grant objectives (hire consultant, organize staff resources)
- Illuminate and, if any, determine how to meet any Illinois DNR IT requirements for a new database
- Organize an efficient and effective process for gathering and incorporating state agency direction and expertise

- b) Implement fixed site monitoring starting in October 2025

UMRBA Water Quality Assessment;
State agencies in-kind and funding to
UMRBA; USEPA in-kind

- Enter into agreements with state agencies, Metropolitan Council, and USEPA Region 7, including a quality assurance project plan (QAPP) for USEPA Region 5
- Plan and coordinate interstate split-site sampling to ensure consistent laboratory analyses
- Develop a risk communication plan related to potential results, particularly emerging contaminants

II) Nutrient Reduction Program

Gulf Hypoxia Program

- Form the committee responsible for reviewing and refining the Upper Mississippi River Nutrient Reduction Strategy Plan

Draft Actions

Funding Source

<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Complete document discovery and research for the Upper Mississippi River Nutrient Reduction Strategy Plan— Develop the Upper Mississippi River Nutrient Reduction Strategy Plan in coordination with the committee	
III) <u>Chloride Initiatives</u>	UMRBA Water Quality Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Prepare communications messages and strategies related to limited liability for private road salt applicators— Prepare communications messages (e.g., press release template) for states' use during Winter Salt Awareness Week in late January 2025— Develop a multi-year approach to advance interstate cooperation related to chloride runoff reduction, implementing the UMRBA Chloride Resolution	
IV) Harmful Algal Bloom Initiatives	UMRBA Water Quality Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Develop a multi-year approach to improve multi-state cooperation of harmful algal bloom mitigation and response on the Upper Mississippi River, including in partnership with public water suppliers<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employ a gap analysis of capacity and tools – e.g., harmful algal bloom prediction model• Develop an interstate communication and notification system— Illuminate capacity constraints and other issues experienced during a 2024 harmful algal bloom experience— Learn from the most recent and relevant knowledge of harmful algal bloom mitigation and response in a large riverine system	
V) Interstate Cooperation and Coordination	UMRBA Water Quality Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Convene the Water Quality Executive Committee and Water Quality Task Force— Share relevant and timely information with the Water Quality Executive Committee and Water Quality Task Force to support the states in their Mississippi River water quality planning and projects	