



# UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN ASSOCIATION

The Governors of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin formed UMRBA to foster and facilitate interstate water resource planning and cooperative action. Working together through the Association, the five state governments have advanced important joint priorities for the Upper Mississippi River System and have maintained an expectation of multi-purpose management for the river.

## FY 2022 IN-REVIEW

This fiscal year, July 2021 to June 2022, has underscored the importance and quality of the Association's work. UMRBA continued to move state priorities forward by advocating on behalf of the five states, serving as a catalyst and convener, communicating about the river resources and ongoing investments, and developing information and tools to support decision making. In doing so, UMRBA has maintained the Upper Mississippi River's national reputation and recognition as a priority resource.

**UMRBA has communicated the states' joint perspectives** on federal funding and policy matters to Congress and federal agency leadership through letters and meetings.

**UMRBA has established a suite of actionable priorities** through a six-year hazardous spills preparedness strategic plan, a ten-year water quality program plan, and a three-year set of objectives for floodplain resilience planning.

**UMRBA has better connected people and information** among those working in the watershed and in the river. As one example, UMRBA organized briefings of the Upper Mississippi River Restoration program's nutrients trends information to the Hypoxia Task Force and Agriculture Nutrient Policy Council.

**UMRBA has fostered existing and new relationships** in ways that advance the states' joint priorities for river management. UMRBA is working through the Interstate Council on Water Policy to convene and amplify the collective voices of non-federal entities seeking reform of the Corps' project partnership agreements.

**UMRBA has participated in regional and national collaborations and other river management conversations.**

## IMPROVING WATER QUALITY

- UMRBA’s Water Quality Executive Committee developed a ten-year water quality program plan, which outlines specific needs and priorities for advancing interstate water quality management. The plan has a particular focus on the states’ Clean Water Act programs and management of nutrients, chloride, and harmful algal blooms as well as emerging contaminants of concern.
- UMRBA adopted a resolution, formally calling for a robust set of strategies to accelerate efforts to reduce chloride loading, improve our understanding of chloride impacts, and communicate the issues and management challenges and opportunities.
- UMRBA coordinated an important water quality project known as “Monitoring for the Clean Water Act Reaches 8-9 Pilot of the Interstate Water Quality Monitoring Plan.” This project was implemented in partnership with Illinois EPA, Iowa DNR, Missouri DNR and with additional contributions from Missouri Department of Health and Human Services and USEPA to monitor for PFAS. UMRBA anticipates publishing reports in summer 2022 of the monitoring results and the strategy’s effectiveness.

## ENSURING NAVIGATION

- UMRBA launched a navigation assets inventory for the Upper Mississippi River System. It can be viewed at <https://umrba.org/navigation/gis>. It is an interactive map that features ports, terminals, boat accesses, and other navigation-related information. It allows users to search for intermodal access with a certain dock type or storage capacity.
- After decades of advocacy from UMRBA and partners, the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program received over \$884 million.
- UMRBA continues to voice the states’ joint positions on the long term resilience and reliability of the 9-foot navigation channel.

## PROTECTING & RESTORING ECOSYSTEM HEALTH

- UMRBA coordinated and supported interagency consultation for both the Upper Mississippi River Restoration (UMRR) program and the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP).
- UMRBA helped advance priorities of the UMRR Coordinating Committee related to habitat project selection, long term resource monitoring (LTRM) implementation, the 2022 Report to Congress, and an assessment of UMRR’s 2015-2025 strategic plan, including focusing priorities for the remaining few years.
- UMRBA assisted in convening NESP agency partners to prepare for multi-agency execution and in communicating the states’ joint priorities.
- UMRBA convened interdisciplinary experts and decision makers to reach consensus on an approach forward for implementing water level management. Products included a peer-reviewed synopsis of the federal and state agencies’ agreement and an update to the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Report of ecological benefits from managing water levels at various low-water depths during the growing season. This work was supported by USACE Planning Assistance to the States and Sustainable Rivers Program as well as contributions from our federal and state agency partners.

## BUILDING RESILIENCE

- UMRBA recommitted to five long term goals for floodplain resilience, established a set of three-year objectives for advancing those goals, and organized a work plan for 2022 with specific project priorities. Reflecting on what was learned through developing the Keys to the River Report, the UMRBA member states charged the Association with functioning as a central convening entity, incorporating the unique expertise of federal and state agencies, academic institutions, and nonprofit entities and other stakeholder interests

## IMPROVING HAZARDOUS SPILL RESPONSE

- The UMRBA Spills Group developed a six-year strategic plan, which establishes priorities for guiding the members' collaborative work towards advancing the group's mission: to enhance capabilities of all stakeholders tasked with managing incidents impacting the Upper Mississippi River and immediate tributaries through support of integrated planning, coordination, preparedness, and spill response.
- UMRBA completed goals in support of USEPA's Oil Pollution Act program, including for completion of the Minneapolis/St. Paul Sub-Area Contingency Plan and the Illinois and Wisconsin statewide Inland Sensitivity Atlas (ISA) updates.
- UMRBA developed response strategies within the Greater St. Louis Sub-area in coordination with USEPA Regions 5 and 7 as well as updated USEPA Region 5's geodatabase for lands managed by Ohio and marinas located within Michigan in support of the Great Lakes Commission.

## PROTECTING WATER RESOURCES

- UMRBA employed a suite of out-of-basin water diversion planning scenarios to better understand 1) how states' unique approaches and authorities to regulating water use may influence implementation of the Upper Mississippi River Basin Charter and 2) evaluate important contextual questions around the Charter's provisions. This led to a set of next steps, including scoping a cumulative impact assessment and developing educational materials about UMRBA and the states' efforts to consult on potential out-of-basin water diversion requests.

## FY 2023 OUTLOOK

UMRBA finds itself at an inflection point of growth.

There is a greater need than ever for strong collaboration within a framework of partnership to maintain integrated, multipurpose management of the Upper Mississippi River System. This management must be informed by solid ecological, economic, engineering, and social science. It must be founded on the commitment to include all the diverse voices within the Upper Mississippi River System in planning and implementing action.

As such, UMRBA will need to place a strong emphasis on securing financial resources to support the Association's expanding partnership work. This work includes ensuring the states' effective involvement in UMRR and NESP and advancing the 10-year water quality program plan, the five-year UMR spills plan, and the resilience planning actions. It also includes leveraging capacity and improving knowledge by connecting the many ongoing science and management efforts in the Upper Mississippi River floodplain and watershed.

Highlights for FY 2023 include:

- Facilitating and coordinating consultation among the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program and Upper Mississippi River Restoration's implementing partners
- Establishing an interstate task force to help inform the states' resilience planning actions
- Convening nutrient managers and experts and landowners to evaluate multi-benefit conservation practices [with funding support through a USEPA grant]
- Updating the UMR Spills Plan