



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 2023 IN-REVIEW

This fiscal year, July 2022 to June 2023, has underscored the importance and quality of the Association's work. UMRBA continued to implement state priorities 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, federal agency leadership, and stakeholders through appropriations requests, letters, and various engagements. Working with our partners, we have achieved beneficial appropriations and provisions in the Water Resources Development Act of 2022.

UMRBA has advanced a suite of actionable priorities such as publishing the Upper Mississippi River Spills Plan and Resource Manual and coordinating strategic communications of the river's ecological status and trends.

UMRBA has better connected people and information among those working in the watershed and in the river. As one example, UMRBA hosted a workshop focused on accelerating the use of multi-benefit conservation practices.

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. UMRBA has participated in meetings of the Federal Water Subcabinet and the NOAA National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) Executive Council.

UMRBA has strengthened relationships with federal agency leadership, program managers, and technical experts. UMRBA met with USEPA Region 5 and 7 Regional Administrators to strengthen partnership and align priorities.

IMPROVING WATER QUALITY

- UMRBA hosted the first of two workshops for the purposes of finding the most impactful ways to accelerate the use of multi-benefit conservation practices on agricultural lands. These workshops are funded through U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Water.
- UMRBA met with the Regional Administrators from USEPA Regions 5 and 7, aligning shared priorities related to the UMRBA Interstate Water Quality Monitoring Program, basin-wide nutrient management, environmental justice, climate resilience, lead and copper rule, and national primary drinking water regulations for PFAS.
- UMRBA convened deliberations and facilitated information sharing about the states' interstate priorities for managing water quality in the Upper Mississippi River and basin. This includes building collaboration with state Clean Water Act programs and ecological restoration and monitoring work on the Upper Mississippi River System.
- UMRBA advanced plans for interstate water quality monitoring in 2025-2026 and began drafting an emerging contaminant monitoring framework.

ENSURING NAVIGATION

- UMRBA expanded its Navigation Assets Inventory for the Upper Mississippi River System to include the Missouri River. It can be viewed at <https://umrba.org/navigation-assets-inventory>. 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.
- UMRBA partnered with navigation and conservation industry to secure \$67.679 million for the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program in FY 2023.
- UMRBA continues to voice the states' joint positions on the long term resilience and reliability of the 9-foot navigation channel.

PROTECTING AND 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 published 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, Sustainable Rivers Program, and the Upper Mississippi River Restoration program as well as contributions from our federal and state agency partners.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

- UMRBA, in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Institute on the Environment at the University of Minnesota (IonE), launched a new project to enhance climate resilience along the Upper Mississippi River from Minnesota to Missouri. This includes basin-wide downscale climate modeling and exploring how to make resilience planning efforts at local, regional, and systemic scales more accessible and inclusive for the diverse people and communities of the Upper Mississippi River.
- UMRBA participated in the USGS Climate Adaptation Science Center's Nature Based Solutions to Extreme Participation Workshop.

IMPROVING HAZARDOUS SPILL RESPONSE

- The UMRBA Spills Group renewed the UMR Spills Response Plan and Resource Manual, which is a unique, river-focused tool and information source for first responders and contingency planners.
- UMRBA completed goals in support of USEPA's Oil Pollution Act program, including for updating the Illinois and Minnesota statewide Inland Sensitivity Atlas (ISA) updates.
- UMRBA developed response strategies in UMR Pools 25 and 26 in coordination with USFWS and 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 developed a scope for, and initiated the development of, a water availability cumulative impacts assessment. As a first step, UMRBA's member states are aligning their consumptive use data and developing consumptive use coefficients. For some states, UMRBA staff assisted in securing USGS funds to support this work.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

- UMRBA presented and/or participated in state-specific collaboration activities, including as examples Minnesota DNR Roundtable, Missouri Water Protection Forum, Illinois Climate Summit.
- UMRBA promoted its member states' priorities in national forums such as the America's Watershed Initiative, Interstate Council on Water Policy, and National Waterways Foundation.
- UMRBA served as policy and technical experts in federal agency forums such as the USEPA Drinking Water Workshop USEPA Regions 5 and 7 Harmful Algal Bloom meeting.

FY 2024 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 2024 include:

- Facilitating and coordinating consultation among the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program and Upper Mississippi River Restoration's implementing partners
- Preparing for interstate water quality monitoring in 2025 and 2026, and advancing the water availability cumulative impact assessment
- Improving knowledge of future precipitation trends and the impact of floodplain reconnection to improving flood conveyance and storage