

**Minutes of the
175th Quarterly Meeting of the
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association**

**August 5, 2025
La Crosse, Wisconsin**

Wade Strickland called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. on August 5, 2025.

Participants were as follows:

UMRBA Representatives and Alternates:

Rick Pohlman	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Jake Hansen	Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
Kirk Hansen	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Grant Wilson	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Matt Vitello	Missouri Department of Conservation
Erin Fanning	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Levi Woods	Missouri Department of Transportation
Wade Strickland	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Federal UMRBA Liaisons:

JC Nelson	U.S. Geological Survey, Midcontinent Region
Brian Chewning	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Col. Matthew Chase	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Sabrina Chandler	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Others In Attendance:

Nicole Vidales	Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
John Seitz	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Brian McCoy	Illinois Department of Transportation
Liz Scherber	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Grace Loppnow	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Ken Henderson	Missouri Department of Agriculture
Dru Buntin	Missouri Department of Conservation
Sam Clary	Missouri Department of Conservation
Vanessa Perry	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Sammi Boyd	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Kelly Keefe	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Jim Cole	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD

LeAnn Riggs	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Samantha Thompson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Karl Jansen	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Nathan Wallerstadt	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Marshall Plumley	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Davi Michl	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Greg Kohler	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Shawn Sullivan	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Jasen Brown	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Shane Simmons	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Amy McGovern	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3
Kraig McPeck	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services
Sara Schmuecker	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services
Lauren Larson	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services
Greg Conover	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MICRA
Rebecca Neely	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Midwest Fisheries Center
Jon Amberg	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jim Fischer	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Timothy Elkins	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Dane Boring	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
David Pratt	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Amy Shields	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Kim Lutz	America's Watershed Initiative
Sierra Schuchard	America's Watershed Initiative
Brent Newman	Audubon
Alicia Vasto	Audubon
Michael Anderson	Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance
Kathryn Lammers	Friends of the Refuge – Pools 7 and 8
Fritz Funk	Izaak Walton League
Barry Draskowski	Izaak Walton League
Nancy Guyton	Neighbors of the Mississippi
Olivia Dorothy	One Mississippi
Maria Pascual	PwC
Christine Favilla	Sierra Club
Andrew Stephenson	The Nature Conservancy
Philip Adalikwu	University of Minnesota
Nfamara Dampha	University of Minnesota
Heman Lohano	University of Minnesota
Natalie Narvaez	University of Minnesota
Kirsten Wallace	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Brian Stenquist	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Mark Ellis	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Natalie Lenzen	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Sadie Neuman	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Lauren Salvato	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Laura Talbert	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Josh Wolf	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

Minutes

Rick Pohlman moved and Grant Wilson seconded a motion to approve the draft minutes of the May 20, 2025 meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Executive Director's Report

Kirsten Wallace pointed to the Executive Director's report in the agenda packet for a summary of the Association's work efforts since the May 2025 meeting.

Wallace reported that the USACE St. Paul District convened a change of command ceremony on July 18. Wallace reflected on Col. Eric Swenson's commitment to partnership and strategic leadership particularly of the St. Paul District's channel maintenance and management operations. Wallace welcomed Col. Matthew Chase to the Upper Mississippi River regional partnership. Col. Chase introduced himself and expressed his eagerness to work with UMRBA.

Wallace elaborated on the UMRBA Board's meetings with federal department and agency leadership on June 23-26. Wallace thanked Wade Strickland and Matt Vitello for joining the meetings in-person and to Rick Pohlman for joining the meeting with USACE virtually. Wallace also expressed sincere gratitude to Sabrina Chandler, Marshall Plumley, Jon Hortness, Jon Amberg, and all of the federal agency staff who are lending support these meetings, including supporting the scheduling, preparing agency leaders, and assisting in developing communications materials.

Wallace noted the significant time and resources of federal and state agencies over the summer related to the UMRBA Fixed Site Interstate Water Quality Monitoring Project and NESP Reach Planning Workshops.

Wallace pointed to the UMRBA financial statements for April 2025 through June 2025 as provided on pages B-8 to B-16 of the agenda packet. Grant Wilson moved Rick Pohlman seconded the motion to accept the Association's budget report and balance sheet as included in the agenda packet. The motion was approved unanimously.

UMRBA Water Quality Executive Council Charter

As a first step in implementing the 2022-2035 UMRBA Water Quality Program Plan, Nicole Vidales explained that the Water Quality Executive Committee's (WQEC's) revisited its Charter and is presented renewed language to the UMRBA Board for review. The WQEC is recommending the Charter as provided on pages C-1 to C-3 of the agenda packet. Vidales explained that the UMRBA Board provides direction to the WQEC and therefore is seeking the Board's direction for revisions or endorsement.

Vidales discussed the following areas as major highlights of the renewed version:

- Explicitly connecting the WQEC to the UMRBA Board, including describing the Board's responsibility in directing the WQEC's priorities
- Changing the name from the Water Quality Executive Committee to the Water Quality Executive Council

- Expanding the WQEC's ability to create *ad hoc* or standing committees or work groups, beyond the Water Quality Task Force
- Streamlining language describing the WQEC's roles and responsibilities

In response to a prompt from Wade Strickland as Chair, Rick Pohlman moved and Grant Wilson seconded a motion to endorse the renewed Charter for the Water Quality Executive Council as provided in the agenda packet. The motion passed unanimously.

Invasive Carp

State and Federal Monitoring, Research, and Management Efforts

U.S. Geological Survey

JC Nelson summarized the 2023-2027 USGS Invasive Carp Strategic Framework. The Framework is provided at <https://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/1504/cir1504.pdf>.

Nelson explained that no single method is fully effective for managing invasive carp. Therefore, USGS is employing multiple, integrated methods for monitoring, deterring, and managing invasive carp with the goal of preventing the spread of invasive carp and reduce the invasive carp populations and effects. Nelson provided more details about the individual strategies.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Amy McGovern provided a comprehensive briefing of USFWS aquatic invasive species programs and coordination, speaking mostly to the USFWS's interjurisdictional coordination responsibilities related to invasive carp in the Great Lakes Basin and Mississippi River Basin. McGovern noted that USFWS work in the Mississippi River Basin is supported by USFWS base appropriations.

Greg Conover explained the structure and functions that the Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA) provides as an umbrella organization for supporting interjurisdictional fisheries management coordination and communication across the Mississippi River Basin, across 28 state agencies, four federal agencies, and two tribal nations.

Rebecca Neely summarized the work of the Upper Mississippi River Interagency Carp Partnership (UMRICT), which exists under the MICRA umbrella. Neely explained the coordination that exists through the Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee (UMRCC) fisheries, education, and outreach groups. Neely shared the following UMRICT goal and objectives:

- Goal: To minimize the impacts of silver and bighead carp to native species and the ecosystem by reducing the abundance and distribution of silver and bighead carp in the Upper Mississippi River Basin.
- Objectives:
 - Reduce the existing populations of invasive carp in Pools 2-19 while minimizing impacts to native fish populations.

- Reduce the existing populations of invasive carp in Pools 20-22 to reduce propagule pressure and emigration into upper pools while minimizing impacts to native fish populations.
- Minimize upstream movement of invasive carp in the Upper Mississippi River and its tributaries.

Neely listed the priority needs for managing invasive carp in the Upper Mississippi River Basin, as follows:

- Increase the capacity of commercial fishing, processing support, haulers, ice machines, and all other necessary support for contracted removals.
- Increase the capacity of the states (staff and gear) to conduct additional effort within the Upper Mississippi River Basin.
- Install a permanent deterrent at L&D 19 and investigate additional locations for deterrents as redundancies.

In response to a question from Brian Stenquist about future projections of invasive carp, McGovern portended that managing for invasive carp will be an ongoing need for decades and Nelson added that managers will also need to be managing for new emerging aquatic invasive species.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Grace Loppenow reported on Minnesota DNR's efforts to construct a deterrent to invasive carp at L&D 5. Loppenow shared that Minnesota DNR has developed a plan to monitor for fish passage at L&D 5, initiating tagging in spring 2026.

Loppenow said that, in late June 2025, USFWS reported the detection of 10 tagged silver/grass carp detected near the confluence of the Root River, which is a Mississippi River tributary in Pool 8. In response, Minnesota DNR, Wisconsin DNR, USFWS partnered with commercial fishing crews to capture invasive carp in the area. While conditions were ripe, there is no conclusive evidence of spawning. Loppenow also mentioned a partnership among Minnesota DNR, Wisconsin DNR, and USGS to explore whether algae bait can aggregate invasive carp at preferred sites for removal.

Similar to USGS, Loppenow summarized that Minnesota DNR is pursuing a multi-pronged approach to managing invasive carp. Invasive carp captures in Minnesota have increased in recent years, and action is required to reduce the risk of reproduction.

Missouri Department of Conservation

Matt Vitello summarized Missouri Department of Conservations (DoC) management of various aquatic nuisance species. With respect to invasive carp, Vitello provided the Missouri DoC's FY 2026 priorities as including finalizing an invasive carp management plan, using telemetry to describe the movement and habitat use of invasive carp, employing targeted removal, and implementing a harvesting incentive program.

Vitello reported that Missouri DoC is also monitoring for round goby and northern snakehead. Vitello provide background information on the species as well as Missouri DoC's efforts to monitor the species, reduce their populations, and prevent their spread.

Other Board Reports

Wade Strickland pointed to Wisconsin DNR's partnerships with federal agencies and neighboring states as mentioned in earlier reports. Strickland said Wisconsin DNR is in the early stages of developing a management plan for invasive carp and will likely reference and consider the other states' plans.

Rick Pohlman said Illinois DNR is actively engaged in partnership with the Corps and the state of Michigan in constructing Brandon Road as a means for preventing the spread of invasive carp to the Great Lakes Basin.

Kirk Hansen confirmed that the state of Iowa is challenged in accepting federal funds beyond its current rate. Iowa DNR is planning to employ a removal effort in the Des Moines River in 2026.

UMRBA Plans for Policy-Level Cooperation

Kirsten Wallace reported that UMRBA Board and Federal Liaisons met this morning about ways in which their respective agencies can enhance their interjurisdictional cooperating in managing invasive carp as well as other aquatic nuisance species. Following the meeting, UMRBA will convene a small team to recommend a process for developing a strategy encompassing the Upper Mississippi River Basin as well as a companion communications toolkit. Wallace confirmed that UMRBA would partner closely with MICRA in this work.

Flood Risk Modeling and Resilience Capacity Mapping

Nfamara Dampha presented on a two-year project, through the University of Minnesota Natural Capital Project: The Earth-Economy Modelers (NatCap TEEMs), to assess and develop an index to identify flood risk hotspot locations within the Upper Mississippi River Basin and to quantify the benefits of nature-based solutions within those hotspot areas. The research uses the multiplicative equation that risk equals hazard and exposure times vulnerability times lack of coping capacity, exploring the riverine flooding throughout the Upper Mississippi River Basin and pluvial flooding in two smaller geographic locations.

Dampha explained the results of various methods for calculating vulnerability and resilience capacity in the Upper Mississippi River Basin. The estimated annual loss from riverine flooding across the entire Upper Mississippi River Basin is estimated at \$339.47 million.

Dampha previewed results depicting the co-benefits of using nature-based solutions to flooding (i.e., the baseline values of ecological services), including their ability to sequester carbon, reducing the loads of nutrients and sediment to the Mississippi River, improving the availability for water supply, and cooling urban landscapes.

Dampha outlined the next steps for the NatCap TEEMs research, as follows:

- Complete the INFORM Flood Risk Index for the Upper Mississippi River Basin
- Create land-use and land management scenarios
- Develop an INFORM Index for Climate Change – a multi-risk hotspot mapping

In response to a question from Olivia Dorothy, Dampha said the research is not published yet and therefore not available to access online. Dampha anticipates that the research will be published by late spring or early summer 2026, and offered the following link to sign up for information as it becomes available:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdVuYJ2RaxkOYOF0HPgYHLFi8MvukOozUU2aEPZE6vUvneRgQ/viewform?pli=1>.

Stakeholder Reports

America's Watershed Initiative

Kim Lutz provided an update on the effort jointly led by America's Watershed Initiative and The Nature Conservancy to create a Mississippi River Watershed Partnership. In particular, the effort has most recently focused on developing a series of outcome-based goals and organizing a recommendation for a partnership framework. The next steps are to detail potential pathways to action (implementation road maps), continue engagement with priority states, develop tribal engagement plans, develop communications materials for partners, and create a science strategy.

Friends of the Refuge – Mississippi River Pools 7 and 8

Kathryn Lammers reported that the Friends of the Refuge – Mississippi River Pools 7 and 8 hosted a news conference on August 4, 2025 in La Crosse in support of the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program, the USFWS Refuges, and other federal ecosystem programs and projects on the Upper Mississippi River.

Administrative Matters

Future Meeting Schedule

November 2025 in Missouri

- UMRBA Quarterly Meeting – November 18
- UMRRC Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting – November 19

February 2026 to be held virtually

- UMRBA Quarterly Meeting – February 24
- UMRRC Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting – February 25

May 2026 to be held virtually

- UMRBA Quarterly Meeting – May 19
- UMRRC Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting – May 20

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.