

**Minutes of the  
177th Quarterly Meeting of the  
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association**

**February 24, 2026  
Virtual**

Wade Strickland called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. on February 24, 2026.

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
Patrick Phenow	Minnesota Department of Transportation
Matt Vitello	Missouri Department of Conservation
Chris Wieberg	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Chris Klenklen	Missouri Department of Agriculture
Wade Strickland	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

*Federal UMRBA Liaisons:*

Karl Jansen	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD [on behalf of MG Kimberly Peeples]
Sabrina Chandler	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jim Fischer	U.S. Geological Survey, Midcontinent Region [on behalf of JC Nelson]

*Others In Attendance:*

Nicole Vidales	Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Chad Craycraft	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Brian McCoy	Illinois Department of Transportation
Liz Scherber	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Neil Rude	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Ken Henderson	Missouri Department of Agriculture
Heather Peters	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Sam Clary	Missouri Department of Conservation
Vanessa Perry	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Adrian Stocks	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Sammi Boyd	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Carrie Olheiser	National Weather Service, North Central River Forecast Center
Kelly Keefe	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Thatch Shepard	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Jim Cole	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 Wallerstedt	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Marshall Plumley	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Shawn Sullivan	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Matt Mangan	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services
Jim Fischer	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jennifer Dieck	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Molly Van Appledorn	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Katie Flahive	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Headquarters
Jared Schmalstieg	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7
Madeline Heim	Ag and Water Desk
Kim Lutz	America's Watershed Initiative
Sierra Schuchard	America's Watershed Initiative
Meg Galloway	Association of State Floodplain Managers
Brent Newman	Audubon
Alicia Vasto	Audubon
Ken Lubinski	Illinois Water Resources Center
Michael Anderson	Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance
Doug Daigle	Louisiana Hypoxia Program
Madeline Heim	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
Chuck Camillo	Midwest Flood Control Association
Kim Tyrrell	National Conference of State Legislators
Tom Klein	National Conference of State Legislators
Jennie Sauer	National Workforce Solutions
Nancy Guyton	Neighbors of the Mississippi
Olivia Dorothy	One Mississippi
Ken Lubinski	One Mississippi
Christine Favilla	Sierra Club, Illinois Chapter
Andrew Stephenson	The Nature Conservancy
Chuck Chaitovitz	U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Edward LaBelle	Unaffiliated
Kirsten Wallace	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Brian Stenquist	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Mark Ellis	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Tyler Leske	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Henry Hansen	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Natalie Lenzen	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Sadie Neuman	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Laura Talbert	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Josh Wolf	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

## Minutes

Rick Pohlman moved and Kirk Hansen seconded a motion to approve the draft minutes of the November 18, 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 November 2025 meeting.

Wallace elaborated on UMRBA's advocacy efforts as well as its involvement in partnership planning efforts through UMRR and NESP. Wallace applauded USACE, particularly Marshall Plumley, and the federal-state partnership for cohesively to implement UMRR in the past year given the surprising and significant cut in funding. Wallace also expressed appreciation to all partners who worked with the Administration to restore funding in the FY 2026 energy and water appropriations measure for UMRR.

Wallace reported that UMRBA has created policies and documents for ensuring that UMRBA's programs and policies fully comply with federal government nondiscrimination laws. UMRBA has also created routine practices for public engagement and communication, as provided in the draft UMRBA Public Participation Plan and Standard Operating Procedures for UMRBA Quarterly Meetings and Other Public Meetings. On January 8, 2026, UMRBA disseminated an email to its broadest distribution list seeking input on these new documents by March 6, 2026. UMRBA is also asking for input on a Language Accessibility Plan and an Accessibility Plan for Hearing, Visual, Speech, and Other Physical Disabilities. UMRBA published on its website a new Nondiscrimination Notice and Grievance Procedures. The policies and procedures are available on UMRBA's website at <https://umrba.org/nondiscrimination-notice>.

Wallace pointed to the UMRBA financial statements for October 2025 through December 2025 as provided on pages B-13 to B-18 of the agenda packet. Grant Wilson moved and Chris Wieberg seconded the motion to accept the Association's budget report and balance sheet as included in the agenda packet. The motion was approved unanimously.

### Interbasin Diversion Consultation

Kirsten Wallace explained that the Governors' 1989 Upper Mississippi River Basin Charter sets forth a notification and consultation process for any new or increased water diversion out of the basin that would exceed an average of 5 million gallons per day during any 30-day period.

At their February annual meetings, UMRBA members are to report on any qualifying diversion requests. The UMRBA member states reported as follows:

Illinois	— Rick Pohlman	— no diversions to report
Iowa	— Kirk Hansen	— no diversions to report
Minnesota	— Grant Wilson	— no diversions to report
Missouri	— Chris Weiberg	— no diversions to report
Wisconsin	— Wade Strickland	— no diversions to report

On behalf of the states, Strickland directed Kirsten Wallace to send letters to the Governors reporting the results of the annual diversion consultation.

## **Federal Ecosystem Program Planning**

Marshall Plumley provided a detailed report on the implementation of the Upper Mississippi River Restoration and the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Programs. Both programs received major interruptions in funding that significantly slowed or paused plans for project planning, design, and construction. In addition, UMRR long term resource monitoring winter sampling was canceled.

With the outcomes of the FY 2026 appropriation process, Plumley provided USACE's perspectives on restarting or accelerating UMRR habitat projects and implementing NESP ecosystem projects and partnership planning efforts. Currently, UMRR is planning to implement monitoring at very minimal levels unless and until the FY 2026 funds are transferred to the states by mid spring in order to hire sampling crews.

## **FEMA Reform Efforts**

Given FEMA's regulatory and planning roles related to UMRS flood risk reduction and resiliency planning efforts, UMRBA is interested in following FEMA reform efforts and to engage in conversations or offer comments as appropriate. UMRBA is engaging partners who are more closely involved in tracking and are in positions of influencing, the reform efforts. Chuck Chaitovitz with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Meg Galloway of the Association of State Floodplain Managers provided briefings about the efforts within the Administration and Congress to restructure FEMA and adjust its functions and regulatory responsibilities.

The Administration has convened a FEMA Review Council, which was delayed, but is expected to release a report later this spring making reform recommendations to the Administration. Additionally, a bipartisan bill was introduced in the House of Representative that would elevate FEMA to a Cabinet-level department and streamline the agency's processes.

## **Mississippi River Watershed Partnership**

Kim Lutz presented on the proposal developed by the America's Watershed Initiative and The Nature Conservancy to create a Mississippi River Watershed Partnership. Lutz elaborated on the process to convene various federal and state government agency representatives and leading voices from stakeholder interests to develop a set of goals and objectives for the Mississippi River Basin, including the sub-basins, and a network framework for collaboration across the Mississippi River Basin.

## **Mississippi River Watershed Partnership**

Kim Tyrell and Tom Klein presented on the conclusions and recommendations of a new report released by the National Council of State Legislators. The purpose of the report was to examine state policy options for disaster-related risk reduction and resilience in the Mississippi River Watershed.

In summary, and as written in the report, extreme weather will continue to increase the demands on states and make the challenges of coordination, data management and funding more difficult. Without advanced planning and investments in risk mitigation, states may find themselves in a pattern of reactive funding and relief programs, but as highlighted throughout this report, states are making strides to proactively address the issues they face and doing so with the health and longevity of the Basin in mind.

## **Administrative Matters**

### *UMRBA Board Chair Rotation*

Kirsten Wallace thanked Wade Strickland for his service as Board Chair over the past year.

Grant Wilson moved and Rick Pohlman seconded a motion to appoint Chris Wieberg to serve as UMRBA Chair, Kirk Hansen as UMRBA Vice Chair, and Jason Tidemann to serve as UMRBA Treasurer. The motion for carried unanimously by voice vote

### *Future Meeting Schedule*

May 2026 to be held in the Twin Cities Metro Area

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

August 2026 in St. Louis Metro Area

- UMRBA Quarterly Meeting – August 4
- UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting – August 5

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:54 a.m.