Navigation and Ecosystem Portfolio Planner

Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

Employment Type:	Full time
Location:	Edina, Minnesota (hybrid; at minimum three days/week in office)
Salary Range:	$75,000 to $90,000
Benefits:	Insurance, retirement, and leave benefits are outlined below
Applications:	Applications are due **December 11, 2026**; instructions are provided below

The Navigation and Ecosystem Portfolio Planner supports interstate collaboration and cooperative planning of water resources management in the Upper Mississippi River Basin, particularly focused on the river's ability to support UMRBA's goals for transportation and ecosystem health.

The mission of UMRBA is to develop and reflect consensus positions of the five member states about management actions on the Upper Mississippi River System and to create and foster the interstate and interorganizational collaborations necessary to achieve the vision.

Under the supervision of the UMRBA Deputy Director, the Navigation and Ecosystem Portfolio Planner provides strategic insight and recommendations to the basin states, develops analyses of policy issues and solutions, and designs and implements collaborative planning processes.

This position will have a primary focus on supporting UMRBA participation in the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) and Upper Mississippi River Restoration (UMRR) Program. This position will also support other UMRBA efforts, such as interstate priorities related to sediment management, use of nature-based solutions, and invasive species management.

Position Overview

With the support and guidance of the Deputy Director, and in close collaboration with the broader UMRBA staff team, the Navigation and Ecosystem Portfolio Planner will implement the following core responsibilities:

<u>Interagency Cooperation in Federal Programs</u>

Facilitate federal-state partnership approaches to implementing NESP and UMRR. Key areas of focus include:

- **Strategic and Programmatic Planning:** Design and facilitate partnership processes to advance programmatic priorities, align regional goals, and resolve implementation challenges.
- **Ecosystem Health:** Collaborate with partners to define habitat needs, establish ecological restoration goals, and develop measurable objectives for project-level implementation.

- **Navigation Sustainability:** Collaborate with partners to craft navigation sustainability metrics and develop actionable plans to address commercial shipping and navigation infrastructure needs.
- **Adaptive Management:** Facilitate and collaborate in the development and implementation of an adaptive management framework for navigation and ecosystem sustainability and resilience, including assessment of the results of individual and cumulative management interventions and the integration of "lessons learned" into future management plans.

UMRBA Regional Priorities and Consensus Building

Support interstate processes to develop and reflect consensus positions among the five member states regarding navigation and ecosystem priorities. Areas of work may include:

- **Issue Analysis and Opportunity Tracking:** Monitor emerging river system trends, define problem/opportunity statements, and analyze the environmental and political context to identify strategic angles for interstate collaboration.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Represent UMRBA positions and perspectives in external partner forums; keep track of basin planning efforts that impact UMRBA priorities.
- **Subject Matter Expertise:** Serve as a technical resource on inland waterways shipping and large river ecology within the Upper Mississippi River System floodplain and basin.

Communications, Accessibility, and Public Participation

Lead the portfolio's outreach efforts to ensure transparent, inclusive, and accessible communication with stakeholders and partners:

- **Strategic Communications:** Design and execute multi-organizational communications strategies, messaging toolkits, and information products highlighting portfolio outcomes.
- **Public Participation:** Coordinate with partner organizations to strengthen public involvement, providing clear pathways for decision makers to integrate stakeholder input.
- **Policy Compliance:** Implement the UMRBA accessibility and inclusion policy and plan across all communications products and public engagement processes.

Operational Viability

- **Financial Agreements:** Partner with the Deputy Director and Operations Manager to draft work plans and deliverables associated with the financial agreements and grants supporting the navigation and ecosystem portfolio.
- **Other Duties:** Support the broader UMRBA leadership team in advancing organizational policy and programmatic goals as directed.

Position Qualifications

- **Education:** Advanced degree (Master's or Ph.D.) in biology, ecology, water resources, natural resources, environmental science/management, public policy and planning, or related field; or an equivalent combination of education and professional experience.

- **Experience:** Minimum of 7 years of experience in river systems or water resources planning, public policy, or a related field with a demonstrated capacity to manage complex interjurisdictional coordination.

- **Policy and Process Knowledge:** Demonstrated knowledge of interstate river-related issues, large river ecology, and federal legislative and budgetary processes (including familiarity with USACE programs like UMRR or NESP preferred).

- **Core Skills:** Excellent analytical, strategic planning, and oral/written communication skills, including the ability to translate complex technical data into accessible policy briefs.

- **Professional Judgment:** Proven ability to exercise excellent judgment, work collaboratively within a small team framework, and scale independence relative to the designated tier.

- **Travel:** Willingness and ability to travel regionally and nationally, averaging one to two times per quarter.

- **Equity and Accessibility:** Strong commitment to equity and accessibility in both project execution and workplace culture. Ability to act in accordance with UMRBA's equity statement, respect differences of identity and belief, and work constructively across those differences to achieve shared regional objectives.

Benefits Package

- **Direct Compensation Option:** An additional 30 percent of the base salary is provided directly to the employee in lieu of traditional organization-sponsored pension and medical insurance plans, maximizing personal marketplace choice.

- **Tax-Sheltered Health Spending Options:** Access to tax-sheltered health insurance or flexible spending account options.

- **Retirement Savings**: Eligibility for an organizational 403(b) retirement savings plan (employee-funded contributions only).

- **Paid Time Off:** Accrued vacation, sick leave, holidays, and other eligible paid and non-paid leaves of absence.

Application Instructions

By December 10, 2026, interested candidates should submit their application materials electronically via email to umrba@umrba.org. Please include the job title in the subject line of your email. A complete application must include the following materials compiled into a single PDF file:

- Cover letter
- Resume
- Brief writing sample

About the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA)

The UMRBA is a non-profit organization formed in 1981 by the Governors of the five Upper Mississippi River states (Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin) to provide a forum for discussion and collective action on regional water resource issues. Each state is represented on UMRBA by a gubernatorial designee, typically from the state agency with primary responsibility for water management. Federal advisory members include the USACE, USDA, USCG, USEPA, USFWS, USGS, MARAD, and FEMA. UMRBA's activities span a broad range of issues, including commercial navigation, ecosystem health, water quality, flood risk management, hydropower, spill response, and aquatic invasive species. Additional information is available on the UMRBA website at www.umrba.org.

As a leading organization in the Midwest dedicated to solving the complex water resource challenges facing the Upper Mississippi River Basin, UMRBA recognizes the essential importance of including all people and communities in the process of creating and implementing solutions to these challenges. UMRBA welcomes, respects, and appreciates all of the ways individuals identify by race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, and socioeconomic stratum, and is consistently striving to expand the range of voices, experiences, and perspectives that are heard in the discussions we convene throughout the Basin. UMRBA is also committed to understanding and addressing the impact that its policies and programs have on different people and communities, and working to ensure equity in opportunity and outcomes.

UMRBA is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, age, gender identity, gender orientation, family status, or mental or physical limitations unrelated to bona fide job requirements.