

M·N·R·G

Midwest Natural Resources Group



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Resources Group

The Mississippi River Watershed: “America’s River...America’s Heritage”

An Opportunity for Action and Resource Sustainability

The twenty-first century presents unprecedented challenges to the sustainability of the world’s great river systems. These challenges impact the livelihoods of those who depend on freshwater and the ecosystem services provided by rivers and their environments. Economic and environmental sustainability of entire river systems are in jeopardy from the combination of competing use, protracted drought or flooding, changing flows, pollution and nutrient loading, and need for improved land management. Growing populations and development, increased competition for freshwater resources, threats to native biodiversity including exotic species, and ever-changing environmental conditions serve to lower the sustainable environmental quality and value of our nation's waterways. As the largest river system in North America, and the third largest watershed in the world, the Mississippi River demands our attention, vigilance, and dedicated action.

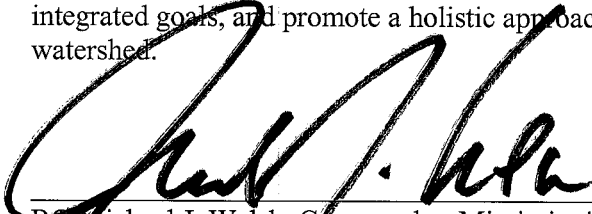
Efforts to sustain the Mississippi River system will require a unified vision and intergenerational commitment to realize that vision. Such a vision is essential if we hope to achieve sustainable development that protects and preserves the integrity and biodiversity of this crucial system. The Federal interagency Midwest Natural Resources Group (MNRG) shares this concern. The vision must be holistic and comprehensive, addressing economic, cultural, ecological, and sociological needs in the context of a single interdependent system. This holistic approach should encourage the development of collaborative projects that recognize and address multiple aspects of that vision.

The issues that threaten the future of the Mississippi River and its tributaries and watersheds are deeply interwoven and stem from myriad natural forces and human actions. The scale, complexity, and urgency of these issues demand a coordinated response that is guided by vision, grounded in good science, and implemented with unprecedented speed, vigor, and discipline. To successfully lead this response requires recognition that:

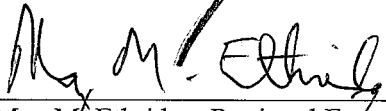
1. River systems worldwide are experiencing similar stresses;
2. While large river research exists, a centralized clearinghouse or network is needed to ensure data is synthesized for broad accessibility and wide availability for informed decision making;
3. Governmental agencies at all levels are encouraged to work in an integrated manner and with a unified vision to ensure the best use of strengths and synergies;
4. A single-agency approach is not effective, a networked cross-agency approach that fosters and provides incentives for government to work with non-governmental agencies, industry, and stakeholders to realize defined goals is desired;
5. Outreach and education are fundamental to the achievement of natural resources goals; and
6. Leadership is required to drive the progress of policies and projects that support sustainable development and management strategies that will ultimately form the basis of a long-term blueprint for river system sustainability.

Detrimental environmental impacts that affect the future sustainability of the Mississippi River should be recognized, emphasized, and addressed in the context of a progressive, interdependent watershed system. Leadership and action within this watershed perspective is urgently required.

We, the undersigned representatives of the Midwest Natural Resources Group, provide this united message as a call to action to urgently address the sustainability of natural resources within the Mississippi River watershed. We believe that the MNRG is in an excellent position to facilitate the development of an integrated vision for natural resources sustainability, support partnerships to achieve integrated goals, and promote a holistic approach to the long-term stewardship of the Mississippi River watershed.



BG Michael J. Walsh, Commander, Mississippi Valley Division
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



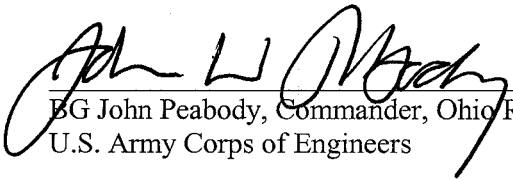
Max M. Ethridge, Regional Executive North Central Area
U.S. Geological Survey



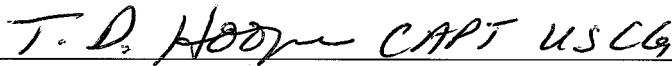
Terrance Viriden, Regional Director
Bureau of Indian Affairs



Juan Palma, State Director
Bureau of Land Management, Eastern States




BG John Peabody, Commander, Ohio River and Great Lakes Division
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



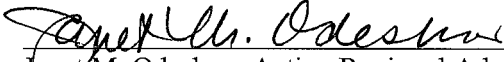
CDR Timothy Cummins, Deputy, Prevention Division
Ninth Coast Guard District



Bharat Mathur, Acting Regional Administrator Region 5
Environmental Protection Agency



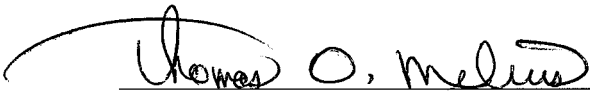
For Jeri Miles, Manager, Great Lakes Airport Division
Federal Aviation Administration



Janet M. Odeshoo, Acting Regional Administrator
Department of Homeland Security/ Federal Emergency Management Agency



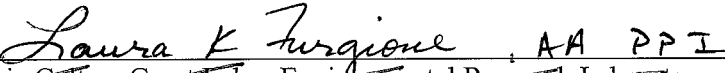
Joyce Curtis, Director of Field Services – North
Federal Highway Administration



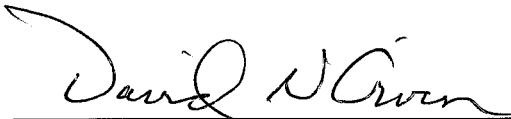
Tom Melius, Region 3 Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



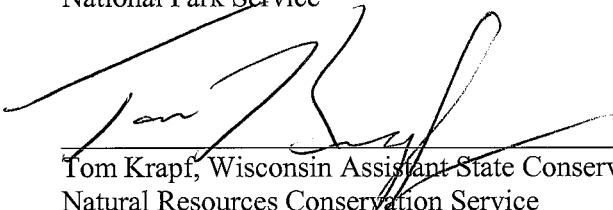
Kerit Connaughton, Eastern Regional Forester
U.S. Forest Service



Marie Colton, ~~Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory~~ AA PPI
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



For Ernie Quintana, Regional Director
National Park Service



Tom Krapf, Wisconsin Assistant State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service