MRRRI

The Mississippi River Restoration & Resilience Initiative

THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI

Our Mississippi River is vital to our nation's health:

- It's the heart of a $500 billion-a-year natural resource- and recreation-based economy, employing more than 1.5 million Americans, and is an important shipping corridor.
- More than 20 million people rely on it for drinking water.
- It serves as a migration corridor for 60% of North American birds.
- And it speaks to our cultural heritage, the inspiration for countless stories and songs that weave through the fabric of America.

But it is also a river at risk on many fronts, facing severe ecological decline.

RESTORING AMERICA'S RIVER

We need a federal Mississippi River initiative.

As we have with other treasured, critical waterways—the Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, and the Everglades—it's time to establish a national coordination effort and direct federal funding to support local initiatives that will restore America's River and build resilience for the communities that depend on it.

A CRITICAL INVESTMENT

Modeled on the successful Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, the Mississippi River Restoration & Resilience Initiative (MRRRI) would provide the framework, funding, and focus to protect America's River.

MRRRI directs the Environmental Protection Agency to consult and collaborate with other agencies, states, tribal nations, and local governments as well as non-governmental organizations to develop and coordinate the initiative. A regularly updated action plan, developed with public input, will guide the implementation of MRRRI and the use of federal funds in order to:

- Protect our drinking water, wildlife, and river-dependent industries by **reducing runoff pollution**
- Reduce flood and storm risks and **increase community resilience** through ecologically sound management
- Protect and **restore wildlife habitat,** including by preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species

*Sources: Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative, NOAA, Union of Concerned Scientists, Northeast-Midwest Institute

MRRRI will provide grants for restoration projects in mainstem river states, cities, townships, and tribal nations while prioritizing our most at-risk communities. The projects and activities funded by MRRRI would complement and build upon existing federal and state programs to ensure the Mississippi is a healthy working river for generations to come.

For our communities, wildlife, and economy, we need to fill this clear gap in our nation's regional waterway restoration programs. It's time to create a federal Mississippi River Restoration & Resilience Initiative (MRRRI).

THE COST OF INACTION

Without MRRRI's investments, so much would remain at risk: our economy, wildlife, recreational opportunities, and ever-rising costs to keep our communities safe and our drinking water clean.

- Unable to absorb floodwaters or build wetlands, today's Mississippi makes riverfront communities more vulnerable to floods, hurricanes and other storms. Damages to main-stem states from the historic 2019 floods alone cost **$6.2 billion***.
- Excess nitrates flow into the river and its tributaries creating a dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, costing our seafood and tourism industries at least **$82 million** a year.
- Habitat loss and aquatic invasive species threaten the river and gulf's wildlife, fisheries and recreational opportunities — and the nearly **700,000 jobs** that these natural resources support.
- Water utilities up and down the river face substantially increasing financial burdens. Just one mid-sized plant to reduce nitrate pollution costs around **$10-15 million.**

Communities of color, Indigenous, rural and low-income communities along the river disproportionately bear these costs. Existing federal programs lack sufficient coordination and partnerships to address these challenges and shared responsibility.