

Upper Mississippi River Watershed Forestry Partnership

USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry

Bringing Forestry to People Through Collaborative Stewardship



Description: The Upper Mississippi River Basin is a major sub-watershed of the entire Mississippi River watershed, the largest floodplain river ecosystem in North America and the third largest of 79 such river systems in the world. The Upper Mississippi River is a ‘working’ river and its watershed is a “working” landscape. Over 200 years of changing land use in the watershed and expanding navigational use of the river have transformed the river and its watershed. Conversion of prairies and forests to agriculture has altered the hydrology of the watershed. Construction of levees and locks and dams have separated the river from half its floodplain, and transformed 655-miles of the Mississippi and 323-miles of the Illinois from free-flowing rivers to a series of pools.

Today, over 50 percent of the corn and 47 percent of the soybeans produced in America are grown in the Upper Mississippi River Watershed. On average, 80 million tons of agricultural commodities, petroleum products, and coal are annually transported on the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. The watershed is home to 30 million residents and over half of them use rivers as their drinking water supply. Nearly 12 million people use the river system each year to hunt, fish, and recreate.



Key Issues:

- Each year, sediment and nutrients are washed off the landscape, into tributaries, and ultimately into the Mississippi River, reducing farm income, increasing channel maintenance costs, threatening drinking water, and filling side channels used by river wildlife.
- The Upper Mississippi River watershed comprises 15% of the entire Mississippi watershed but contributes more than 30% of the nitrogen that causes the Hypoxia Zone in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Aquatic organisms and fish are harmed by environmental contaminants attached to soil particles and deposited in river pools.
- Floodplain forests and wetlands, once important migratory bird habitat, continue to be lost or fragmented by urban population growth, and remaining forests are dominated by a single tree species with little or no understory.
- Dredging river sediment costs more than \$100 million annually.
- State and Private Forestry and State Forestry Agencies partnering with agencies, organizations and local resources can help improve the health of the Upper Mississippi River Watershed.

Accomplishments:

- Formed the Upper Mississippi River Forestry Partnership: A cooperative venture of Northeastern Area and six Midwest State Foresters.
- Drafted the Upper Mississippi River Forestry Partnership action plan. The plan seeks to strengthen coordination among state forestry agencies, link State Foresters directly to agencies and groups working on watershed issues, develop and implement assessments and demonstration projects, and conduct educational projects that inform residents on key watershed issues.
- Provided a grant to the State of Wisconsin to hire a Watershed Coordinator to implement the Upper Mississippi River Forestry Partnership action plan.
- Formed partnership to incorporate a watershed Web site on a Minneapolis and St. Paul television station to educate their viewers on watershed health and how trees improve watershed condition.

Budget History: Upper Mississippi River Forestry Partnership has been supported through a number of Watershed and Clean Water Grants, which are funded through the Forest Stewardship Program. In 2002, one of these grants provided for the establishment of a watershed coordinator position for 2 years. FY 2002 funding was not made available to the six state forestry partnership until 2003.

Upper Mississippi River Forestry Partnership (<i>\$ Thousands</i>)				
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004
Watershed Coordinator		\$150		
Watershed Projects	\$157		\$40	\$36

Future Direction:

- Assess forest extent, condition and change in relation to water quality and river and streams conditions in the Upper Mississippi River Watershed.
- Educate landowners and resource professionals through documents, workshops and demonstrations for forestry solutions that reduce sediment and nutrient losses from the watershed and diversify landowner income.
- Provide accelerated technical assistance to private landowners in targeted watersheds.
- Assist federal, state, local, and landowner partners develop restoration strategies.
- Act as catalyst for innovative approaches to tree and forest restoration projects through a cooperative grants program aimed at local and watershed partners.
- Establish the watershed in the news Web site and test it for a year.

Kathryn Maloney, Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
610-557-4103 (4177-FAX)
kmaloney@fs.fed.us
<http://na.fs.fed.us>

Robin Morgan, Asst. Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
610-557-4124 (4126-FAX)
rmorgan@fs.fed.us

Mike Prouty, Field Rep.
1992 Folwell Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55108
651-649-5276 (5238-FAX)
rprouty@fs.fed.us



1/13/04 – revised