

# Upper Mississippi Forest Partnership

USDA Forest Service  
Northeastern Area  
State and Private Forestry



**Description:** The mission of the Upper Mississippi Forest Partnership is to improve water quality and migratory bird habitat in the Upper Mississippi River watershed by restoring bottomland forests and improving the condition of existing forests throughout the watershed.

## Key Issues:

- Dams and levees have changed the hydrology of the Upper Mississippi, leaving a bottomland hardwood forest lacking in diversity and regeneration.
- A “hypoxic zone,” characterized by low oxygen levels in the water, is threatening marine life in the Gulf of Mexico. About 39 percent of the nitrogen and 26 percent of the phosphorus in the hypoxic zone come from the Upper Mississippi. A lack of riparian buffers along the river and its tributaries contributes significantly to this problem.
- Many birds that depend on the Mississippi River as a migratory flyway or for breeding and nesting habitat are in decline, including the northern pintail, greater scaup, and the cerulean warbler.

## Accomplishments:

- The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation announced the eighth round of requests for proposals for project funding through the Upper Mississippi Watershed Fund. Five proposals were awarded a total of \$223,000, matched by \$632,000. Funded projects include:

### **American Land Conservancy (IL)**

Conserve 40 acres of forested Cache River wetlands and convey them to the Illinois DNR.

### **Great River Greening (MN)**

Restore 100 acres of high-quality forest within the Rum River Watershed of the Anoka Sandplain ecoregion focusing on private land and landowners.

### **National Wild Turkey Federation, Inc. (IA)**

Restore oak woodlands and savannas on public and private land within the Stephens State Forest Bird Conservation Area.

### **National Audubon Society (MN, IA)**

Initiate a pilot project to promote floodplain forest management by private landowners in and adjacent to Important Bird Areas along the Upper Mississippi River.

### **Friends of the Mississippi River (MN)**

Enhance the maple-basswood and floodplain forest by controlling exotic invasive plants in the MN DNR Scientific & Natural Area, Hastings Sand Coulee.

- In FY 2010, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry supported several projects in the Upper Mississippi River Basin through its competitive resource allocation process and the Forest Stewardship Program. These projects include:

### **Iowa DNR (IA)**

Reforestation of bottomland hardwoods and restoration of oak woodlands in the Upper Iowa, Turkey, and Yellow River watersheds.

### **Iowa DNR (IA)**

A new communication and marketing effort with targeted outreach—Maximizing Forest Reserve Potential through Targeted Outreach in the Driftless Area—is expected to increase the number of Forest Reserve landowners with a forest stewardship plan.

### Minnesota DNR (MN)

Coordinated collaboration through the Forest Resources Council to increase riparian forest stewardship in Atikin County, promote forest management in the rapidly growing Four Corners area, increase forest management in southeastern Minnesota, and assess the feasibility of a Forest Bank program.

- The Midwest Natural Resources Group (MNRG) involves 14 Federal agencies. A 2009 Call to Action letter urged a coordinated effort to address natural resource sustainability in the Upper Mississippi River. The MNRG is focusing its Upper Mississippi efforts in the Root River watershed in southeastern Minnesota, working with the Root River Basin community to identify and respond to its conservation needs.
- In June 2010, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Sand County Foundation hosted an “America’s Inner Coastal Summit.” This was the first step involving many partners in developing and implementing a 200-year vision for the Mississippi River.
- Sponsored a Bottomland Ecosystem Restoration Conference March 8-10, 2011, in Collinsville, IL.

**Budget History:** In FY 2006, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry signed a cooperative agreement with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to manage the Upper Mississippi Watershed Fund. Habitat improvement projects are funded with carryover funds and State and Private Forestry Redesign funds.

<b>Upper Mississippi Forest Partnership</b>				
<i>(\$ in thousands)</i>				
	<b>FY 2007</b>	<b>FY 2008</b>	<b>FY 2009</b>	<b>FY 2010</b>
<b>U.S. Forest Service</b>				
Watershed coordination <sup>1</sup>	50 (NFWF)		50 (NFWF)	
Habitat improvement projects	85	600	300	883
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$135</b>	<b>\$600</b>	<b>\$350</b>	<b>\$883</b>
<b>National Fish &amp; Wildlife Foundation Upper Mississippi Watershed Fund</b>				
Habitat improvement projects – FS \$ <sup>2</sup>	161	500	313	223
Projects funded with other sources	40			
Match provided by recipients	501	1,029	1,171	632
<b>Total Funds to Projects</b>	<b>\$702</b>	<b>\$1,529</b>	<b>\$1,484</b>	<b>\$855</b>

1. Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry dollars are provided for NFWF fund administration.
2. Forest Service funds are provided for habitat improvement projects.

### Future Direction:

- Expand the partnership to other Federal agencies and nonprofit organizations
- Coordinate partnership activities with the Forest Service Middle Mississippi River Partnership and the Midwest Natural Resources Group (11 Federal agencies)
- Continue to use Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis to target Upper Mississippi Watershed Fund projects

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