



June 2017

“I don’t want a levee.” Mayors Battle Another Round of Flooding, Push Corridor-Wide Solutions

Flooding Impacts Mississippi River Cities from Iowa to Louisiana: Powerful storms passed through the middle-Mississippi River Valley in early May resulting in significant impacts. Mississippi River cities from Davenport to Baton Rouge and two-thirds of Missouri as well as half of Illinois were under a flood warning.

Over 26 MRCTI cities were in the path of moderate to major flooding in May and June adding tens of million of dollars to a disaster impact total approaching \$51 billion for the corridor since 2011. Flooding was not the only impact sustained this round. Powerful storms left 180,000 residents without power in Memphis over Memorial Day.



Pictured L to R: Mayors Harry Rediger of Cape Girardeau, MO; Ron Counts of Arnold, MO; and George Flaggs of Vicksburg, MS

“We’re now living in a world of climate extremes and the Mississippi River is a good example of that. We don’t just get normal spring rains, we get huge, loaded storms. We don’t just get patterns of mild weather, we get above normal heat coupled with long dry periods that dip us into drought,” explained Mayor Walker of Alton, IL.

“I don’t want a levee,” declared Mayor Counts of Arnold Missouri, whose city have been flooded three years in a row. “What I want is to buy residents out of the flood plain and build a riverfront park that is designed to flood,” further explained Mayor Counts during an MRCTI press availability in May. Arnold is situated just south of St. Louis and north of another vulnerable area—Cape Girardeau, MO where the River crested just shy of the all-time historic record set only sixteen months ago.

But Vicksburg, MS faced a much more urgent problem. Eight feet of flood water sitting above the city’s main water line caused the pipe to buckle and rupture leaving over 24,000 residents without water for four days. In a letter to MRCTI, Mayor Flaggs personally thanked MRCTI cities for their water donations and MRCTI Corporate Advisory Board Members American Water and Tetra Tech for their expertise and technical assistance.

“Projects such as installing riverfront parks like we have in Davenport and creating retention lakes like Mayor Hollowell is in Helena create resilience to protect jobs, secures our economy, and enhance both the built and natural infrastructure,” iterated Frank Klipsch, Mayor of Davenport, IA.

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Attitudes are changing on the River. “During a flood, all folks want to talk about is building a wall or a levee and no one would certainly blame them for that. However, the flood of 2017 has proven different. People are now talking about moving out of the floodplain, giving the River room; other natural approaches are on the table,” reflected Colin Wellenkamp, Executive Director of MRCTI.

“Riverfront areas can be an amenity for our cities, not a liability if managed correctly,” said Mayor Counts of Arnold. Mayor Hollowell of Helena—West Helena, AR gave an example of how connected floodplain can mitigate flooding: “My city has the benefit of being south of the

West Memphis flood plain area which can relieve a lot of pressure off of us. Relieving that pressure is what it’s all about. That is a mitigation strategy we are embracing more and more on the River as we determine how to absorb risk on site within our own cities instead of sending it down river at a more dangerous volume,” explained Mayor Hollowell.

Levees and floodwalls protect critical infrastructure like power stations, water treatment plants, ports, and the downtown core; however, these are but two tools in a wider array of options mayors are increasingly considering. Wetlands, marshes, connected floodplain, habitat restoration, backwater channeling, and reduced use of impervious surfaces are all part of the solution now.



St. Paul Mayor and MRCTI Co-Chair Chris Coleman hosts National Adaptation Forum

For the second time in a row, the National Adaptation Forum was hosted along the Mississippi River. Only occurring once every two years, the Forum took place last in 2015 in St. Louis. That year, MRCTI urged the Forum stay on the River and Mayor Coleman stepped-up to host over 1,000 attendees in his city this May. Mayor Coleman presented at the Forum discussing recent developments regarding potential U.S. withdrawal

from the Paris Agreement, flooding in the middle and lower stems of the Mississippi River, and results for the corridor in the just-passed federal spending bill.

Joining Mayor Coleman were Mayor Betsy Hodges of Minneapolis and Mayor Tim Kabat of La Crosse, WI. Mayor Kabat presented on a panel the challenges and benefits of building a corridor-wide coalition of Mayors united around one vision for the waterway. Mayor Kabat also met with the United Nations Environment Program toward further solidifying the partnership with MRCTI on international food and water security.

MRCTI also pitched to Forum organizers the prospect of holding NAF 2019 in southern Louisiana. A decision should be announced by December 2017.

Congress Funds MRCTI Priorities in Omnibus Funding Bill

This May, the President signed into law the funding bill for FY 2017. In the bill were many of MRCTI’s top priorities for this year. MRCTI Co-Chair Belinda Constant, Mayor of Gretna, LA offered her praise to the mayors: “I want to congratulate the mayors on this achievement. The hard work, calls, letters, and the DC meeting have payed-off... literally.

Success for MRCTI

Below is a listing of the priorities MRCTI Mayors pushed for collectively with the funding requested and realized.

Program	Request	Enacted
FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant	\$100 m	\$100 m
EPA Non-Point Source Water Pollution Control Grants	\$200 m	\$170 m
Drinking Water/Clean Water State Revolving Loan Funds	\$2.3 b	\$2.3 b
Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program	\$33 m	\$20 m

Program	Request	Enacted
USGS Water Resources Program	\$238 m	\$214 m
DOT Marine Hwy Grant Program	\$5 m	\$5 m

Mayor Constant is quick to point-out that mayors now need to work with states and federal agencies to bring this money home. Soon, FEMA, EPA, and DOT will be releasing their notices of funding opportunities for these grant programs.

Mayors are encouraged to apply for the Marine Highway Grant Program to assist their ports, make use the their state’s clean water/drinking water revolving loan funds, submit disaster mitigation projects to their states for mitigation grant consideration, and ensure their states are including nutrient loading in their 319 grant plans to secure city source water.

Funding Bill Passed at a Critical Moment

Considering the disaster impacts the River Valley has sustained this spring, the funding bill could not have come at a better time nor can the funding roll-out fast enough.

Mayors may contact MRCTI for guidance on capturing as much of these funds as possible.

Mayor Counts of Arnold, MO describes disaster mitigation as something that will pay for itself with the next storm.

Mayors may contact MRCTI for guidance in capturing these funds.

Mayor Darryl Grennell of Natchez, MS Represents MRCTI for Infrastructure Week 2017 in DC

There are actually two “Infrastructure Weeks” this year: the one in Washington, DC took place May 15-19; the broader national infrastructure week takes place June 5-9. Leaders and citizens around America came to DC to highlight the state of infrastructure – roads, bridges, rail, ports, airports, water and sewer systems, the energy grid – and encourage policymakers to invest in the projects, technologies, and policies to renew our infrastructure. *Continued on page 7*



Mayor Grennell (center) meets with Congressman Jason Lewis (R), 2nd district of Minnesota, and Congresswoman Elizabeth Esty (D), 5th district of Connecticut, during the House Reception for Infrastructure Week in Washington, DC



Pictured right, Congressman Jason Smith of Missouri and new Co-Chair of the Mississippi River Caucus



Pictured above L to R: Mayor Lionel Johnson of St. Gabriel, LA; Congressman Garret Graves of Louisiana; Mark Binsfeld of JF Brennan; Anne Lewis, President of America's Waterway; Senator Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, Colleene Thomas, Office of Senator Baldwin

MRCTI Mayors Present Infrastructure Plan to White House and Congress

Mayors from cities along the Mississippi River gathered in Washington, DC the first week of March for a series of meetings with Members of Congress and White House officials to press the need to maintain and restore the infrastructure that manages America's largest waterway. It

was the fifth annual Capitol Meeting of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative (MRCTI), an association of 75 Mississippi River Mayors from cities and towns in all 10 states bordering the Mississippi River. MRCTI's infrastructure plan released at a March 2 press conference, recommends supporting and strengthening federal programs and funds administered by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Transportation, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Department of the Interior, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,



which work together to manage and protect the critical water resource and have the ability to return as much as five times the investment back to heartland taxpayers.

The platform also calls for investments to restore the river's floodplains and ecosystems and modernize its lock-system. The plan--calling for a total investment of \$7.93 billion --has the support of several businesses operating along the Mississippi River.

"President Trump won America's heartland by promising to rebuild our communities and infrastructure, and now he's in a position to deliver on that promise," said Mayor Belinda C. Constant of Gretna, Louisiana and co-chair of MRCTI. "We look forward to working with the administration to protect our nation's most critical waterway, build up our communities and bolster the economy of cities and towns throughout the River Basin."

The platform calls for a total investment of \$7.93 billion--most of which could be covered simply by funding existing federal programs at near-current levels. For example, the mayors are calling for the PreDisaster Mitigation Grant Program to be fully funded at \$100 million. The program, administered through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, supports pre-disaster planning in 39 states. Every federal dollar spent on disaster mitigation yielded four dollars in benefits (five dollars for floods) and saves money in

post-disaster recovery funds. The Fiscal Year 2017 budget cut the program by nearly 50 percent, leaving the region's residents and economy at risk at a time when climate change is causing damaging extreme weather to occur with greater frequency and severity.

"The cities and towns along the Mississippi River are geographically vast, and politically and demographically diverse, but we all rely on the river for our drinking water, farmland irrigation and economies," said Mayor Chris Coleman of St. Paul, Minnesota, and co-chair of MRCTI.

"But the incredible economic benefits of the Mississippi River extend far beyond the basin. The federal government must invest in protecting and bolstering the river to ensure that we are securing this priceless resource for future generations and maximizing its economic potential.

The mayors also proposed mechanisms to supplement taxpayer-funded infrastructure with revenue-neutral financing proposals such as repatriating overseas holdings into tax-exempt municipal bonds. The plan, which is based on decades of data on the river's ecology and economy, highlights the importance of preserving federal data collection capabilities. Federal data collection informs infrastructure-building programs such as the U.S. Geological Survey's Water Resources Program to monitor water quality.

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THE RIVER IS AN ECONOMIC LIFELINE



Pictured above, Mayor Chris Coleman of St. Paul holds-up the MRCTI Infrastructure plan at the Corps Dinner

The Mississippi River is the economic lifeline for the center of the country. The river basin and its tributaries span 31 states and cover nearly one third of the nation. The river is the linchpin of the nation's domestic freight and water infrastructure, transporting 40 percent of the nation's agricultural output.

The Mississippi's main stem provides drinking water to 20 million people in 50 cities, and 80 billion gallons of fresh water to industries every day, which rely on a clean and healthy watershed. It is America's most essential inland waterway, creating the world's most agriculturally productive zone, the largest navigable water system, and the largest global trade footprint of any US waterway.

The river generates more than \$496.7 billion in annual revenue and directly supports 1.5 million jobs, mostly in manufacturing, tourism and agriculture. Nationally, the river makes possible the nation's only trade surplus. Yet, all these economic benefits are at risk due to both natural and man-made infrastructure decay.

Much of the infrastructure along the Mississippi--and across the country--has decayed beyond its design-life, and in many cases is nearing a state of compromise. The American Society of Civil Engineers grades the nation's infrastructure a "D." The cost of this decay continues to increase. Infrastructure failures on the Mississippi River alone cost the nation more than \$300 million per day.

BUSINESSES SUPPORT THE PLAN



The \$7.93 billion policy platform would support eight sectors of US industry, sustain critical ecological assets, generate \$24 billion in economic

Pictured bottom opposite column, Antti M. Suhonen Executive Director, Infrastructure Public Finance Corporate & Investment Bank, J.P. Morgan

activity, create nearly 100,000 new jobs, and mitigate hundreds of millions of dollars in disaster impacts.

In 2016, Carbon Disclosure Project collected data from 47 companies that reported exposure to water risks in the Mississippi River Basin, either current and/or future, that could generate a substantive change in their business, operations, revenue or expenditure. These risks--including flooding, water scarcity, and regulatory uncertainty--have clear commercial implications, highlighting the need for investment in infrastructure that prevents disruption.

SMART INFRASTRUCTURE REDUCES IMPACTS



Pictured above, Mayor Emeka Jackson-Hicks of East St. Louis, IL discusses pipeline rupture impacts on drinking water

Since the turn of the millennium, natural disasters have become more severe and more frequent in the United States, creating unprecedented costs for local governments. Since 2005, the Mississippi River Valley has sustained successive 100-, 200- and 500-year flood events, a 50-year drought, Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Isaac. Dis-

asters along the Mississippi River have become persistent and systemic, incurring more than \$50 billion in costs since 2011. In the last decade, 30 states in the US have issued 10 or more more disaster declarations; six states have issues 20 or more.

"The last decade has brought costly drought and devastating floods to the Mississippi River corridor," said Frank Klipsch, Mayor of Davenport, Iowa. "Davenport has adapted by creating a riverfront park that gives the River room to move, adds to our natural infrastructure, and reduces the cost of protecting our city from the damage floods can cause. But we also need to know that the federal government has our backs when it comes to managing America's largest waterway--which happens to be in our backyard."

In 2012, disasters cut into the total revenue of the Mississippi River economy by 8.75 percent in actual losses, and more in follow on losses. On average over the last five years, disasters are costing the Mississippi River economy close to 3 percent annually.

In 2015-2016 alone, the Mississippi River Valley incurred over \$10 billion in impact costs, including an estimated \$1 billion in damage from flooding that stretched from Grafton, IL to New Orleans, LA in the span of two months (December 2015 and most of January 2016). In August 2016, as much water fell on the Baton Rouge area over an 18 day period as is carried by the entire Mississippi River, causing flooding exceeding \$10 billion in damages around just the Baton Rouge area of Louisiana.

“Infrastructure doesn’t necessarily mean putting down more concrete,” said Francis Slay, Mayor of St. Louis, MO. “Some of our most reliable infrastructure comes from restoring naturally-occurring ecosystems like wetlands and reconnected floodplains. This kind of investment has a huge rate of return, and protects our communities and economy while supporting a healthy environment.”



Pictured top: Major General Donald Jackson, Deputy Commanding General for Civil Operations, USACE; Roy Wright, Deputy Assoc Admin for FEMA. Bottom L to R: Roy Buol, Mayor of Dubuque, IA, Congressman Rod Blum (IA); Ted Sykes, President of American Queen Steamboat Company; Teri Goodmann, Assistant City Manager, City of Dubuque



Pictured : Mayor Grennell gives formal remarks in the Senate to the Resilient Water Management Meeting hosted by the World Resources Institute

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Mayor Grennell delivered formal remarks on the MRCTI plan to restore the natural and built infrastructure of the Mississippi River Corridor to: U.S. DOT Committee on the Marine Transportation System, Value of Water Campaign, World Resources Institute, and the National League of Cities.

Grennell also met with the National Governors Association, FEMA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Association of Manufacturers, Climate Nexus, Senator Wicker, Senator Cochran’s appropriations team, and Congressman Harper.

The Mayor of Natchez voiced his concerns for the infrastructure plan being assembled in the White House pointing-out that there does not seem to be much indication of new federal investment and that the concentration may be on sporadic individual projects that are not necessarily part of a larger more cohesive national strategy. Members of the Mississippi delegation were quick to assure Mayor Grennell that the White House proposal will be added to by Congress and the funding is ultimately up to the House and Senate.

Overall, the MRCTI infrastructure plan received positive reaction from stakeholders during the week.

MRCTI Mayors Enter Into Partnership with CDP to link city projects with private investment around the world



Mayors meet in the U.S. Capitol during the MRCTI Capitol Meeting to discuss critical partnerships that compliment the Mayors' infrastructure restoration plan

In an effort to link MRCTI member cities with private investment opportunities, this April, MRCTI entered into a partnership with CDP, formally known as the Climate Disclosure Project. CDP works to match city projects with a global pool of private investors.

CDP is the world's premier sustainable project database developer. CDP has a network of investors and purchasers, representing over \$100 trillion. These investors use CDP's data and insights to make better-informed investment decisions. CDP's 89 supply chain members represent a purchasing power of over \$2 trillion.

MRCTI Co-Chairs hosted an introduction to the CDP platform for more than 30 mayors through all ten river states. Lance Pierce, North American President of CDP, and Katie Walsh, Director of the U.S. Investor Matchmaking Platform lead the discussion on how mayors could profile their projects for exposure to investors world-wide.

CDP Partners and bank representatives that MRCTI met with emphasized they are looking for projects to invest in that are sustainable, resilient, and compliment the ecological assets of the Mississippi River.

MRCTI 6th Annual Meeting to be held in St. Louis, Sept. 12-14

Mayors will gather in St. Louis September 12-14, 2017 to solidify powerful partnerships with global investment groups, announce project success with federal agencies like FEMA and USGS, and hold a historic meeting with state legislators along the entire Mississippi River. MRCTI will also announce new members of the Corporate Advisory Board. The Hyatt Regency St. Louis at the Arch the Annual Meeting hotel. A room block designated "Mississippi River Cities & Towns" is available to make reservations at a reduced rate.



MRCTI Annual Meeting

St. Louis 2017, The Water Around Us