



Pictured L to R: Mayors George Flagg of Vicksburg, MS; Bob Gallagher of Bettendorf, IA; Belinda Constant of Gretna, LA; Francis Slay of St. Louis, MO; Dave Kleis of St. Cloud, MN; Darryl Grennell of Natchez, MS; Richard Lee of Port Allen, LA; Harry Rediger of Cape Girardeau, MO; Russell Loven of Guttenberg, IA

Mayors Unveil Plan to Achieve Clean Water in Ten States

At their Annual Meeting in Natchez, MS Mayors along the Nation's most important inland waterway announced a multi-pronged approach to improving the water quality of the Mississippi River.

"Mayors of MRCTI consider clean water a top priority because more than 20 million people and 50 cities drink the surface water of the Mississippi River. Also, the top three economies on the Mississippi are Manufacturing, tourism, and agriculture generating \$366 billion in annual revenue directly supporting over 1.1 million jobs. These three economies depend on one vital resource – clean fresh water." said Mayor Dave Kleis, Mayor of St. Cloud, MN and MRCTI Executive Committee member representing MN.

More than 52 percent of the nation's total fresh water withdrawals are sourced from surface water—rivers, lakes, and streams. largest source of jobs on the Mississippi River. Data from USGS shows the Mississippi River Corridor as one of the most intensive surface water

use regions withdrawing a minimum of 38 billion gallons annually. The Mayors' program is comprised of three parts: 1) Increase the capacity of federal programs that assist states to reduce their nutrient loading quotient; 2) Increase nutrient monitoring capacity throughout the Mississippi River Valley and bolster state efforts to set goals and timelines for both nitrogen and phosphorus; 3) Create market signals within the food production and retail industries that nutrient reduction practices are an important supply chain control for city procurement policies and priorities.

Landmark Alliance with Walmart Announced

Part of the Mayors' plan includes a unique alliance with Walmart to incentivize sustainable agriculture through the supply. Mississippi River Cities and Walmart pledged a collective effort in urging food suppliers set aside acreage in all ten Mississippi River states for the implementation of nutrient reductive practices such as cover crops. Cities further committed to using procurement authority to create directives that require a portion of city-purchased food be from acreage practicing nutrient reduction.

Mayors Represent MRCTI in

Mexico and China

Advance International Agreement to Achieve Global Food and Water Security

MRCTI Mayors Urge nations to sustain food-producing river Basins, include rivers in their climate change strategies

MRCTI gained new signatories to an international agreement to mitigate climate impact on the world's food and freshwater supply. Mayor Belinda Constant presented at the World Assembly of River Basins in Merida, Mexico.

"One of the greatest climate change threats to the world is a dramatic alteration to our food supply and decrease of freshwater. Me and my fellow mayors see the adoption of an international sustainability agreement imperative to saving river basins—including ours—from climate change and major population growth," said Mayor Belinda Constant, Gretna, LA and MRCTI Co-Chair.

The agreement seeks to protect surface/ground waters to ensure food and water security. It also contains action items on developing a water quantity/quality program.

The MRCTI agreement was signed by Mr. Manuel Alejandro Gomez Melchor, President of the North American Network of Basin Organizations; Mr. Normand Caze-lais, Secretary General of the North American Network of Basin Organizations; Mr. Lupercio Ziroldo Antonio, Secretary of the Brazilian Network of Basin Organizations; Mr. Ramiro Martinez Costa, President of the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organizations, Tracy Molefi, Chair of the African Network of Basin Organizations, and the nation of Senegal.

While Mayor Constant was in Mexico, Mayors Chris Coleman of St. Paul and Roy Buol of Dubuque were in Beijing urging mayors and international organizations to make healthy rivers part of their climate mitigation plans. Our natural infrastructure has carbon and other greenhouse gas reductive properties. A 2013 study by the Smithsonian found that freshwater wetlands, can absorb up to 32 percent more carbon in environments. Forests, marshes, streams, and creek vegetation fed by rivers add to greenhouse gas storage capacity.

"A U.S. River Cities association is playing a role in this Summit because climate impacts are not confined to city or state boundaries, they are multi-regional in scope; and, freshwater ecosystems like the Mississippi River Valley play a valuable role in reducing our greenhouse gas footprint," said Chris Coleman, Mayor of St. Paul, MN and Co-Chair of MRCTI.

Since China produces food for more than 20 percent of the world's population and that production is sustained by the agriculturally rich three rivers plain, it is important China be included in the effort to protect our climate change.



Senegal became the first national government to sign the Mayors' International Water Security Agreement. Diene Fayne, Senegal Secretary of State for Water joined MRCTI Co-Chair Belinda Constant in adding Senegal to the agreement during the World Assembly of River Basins in Merida, Mexico this June. Senegal has unique water challenges throughout the Senegal River Basin. The country depends on the multi-national river for its agriculture and drinking water supply. Traversing a semi-arid geography, the Senegal River is very vulnerable to drought. Water quantity actions of the agreement were their priority.

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Top picture L to R: Ramiro Martinez Costa, President of the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organizations; Lupercio Zirollo Antonio, Secretary of Brazilian Network of Basin Organizations; Mayor Belinda Constant, Normand Cazalais, Secretary General of the North American Network of Basin Organizations; Tracy Molefi, Chair of the African Network of Basin Organizations; Manuel Alejandro Gomez Melchor, President of the North Network of Basin Organizations; Jean-Francois Donzier, General Secretary of the International Network of River Basins. Bottom: Mayor Coleman meets with Erik Solheim, Executive Director of the UN Environmental Program. Mayor Coleman addresses the U.S.—China Climate Summit in Beijing. Mayor Buol of Dubuque, IA in Beijing, China.

MRCTI 5th Annual Meeting in



Mayors gathered in Natchez, MS for their fifth Annual Meeting to celebrate the city's 300th anniversary and unveil agreements regarding clean water, disaster resilience, and National Geographic.

Clean Water Alliance with Walmart Stores, Inc.



Walmart has agreed to an alliance with MRCTI on reducing nutrient loading in the Mississippi River through incentivizing the supply chain around practices that retain nitrogen and phosphorus mitigating what mayors deem the greatest threat to their water security.

According to Mayor Dave Kleis, "One of the greatest threats to our water is nutrient loading. Our cities want to make a difference in reducing the amount of nutrients flowing into our water. We found that procurement requirements around the food cities purchase for city facilities, programs, and events could send a signal to the marketplace that controlling for nutrient pollution in the supply chain is critical."

In answer to this, "Walmart will continue its work on nutrient reduction while launching an alliance with MRCTI. To-date, Walmart is working with 17 suppliers in its agriculture supply chain engaging 23 million acres in best practices.

We plan to continue to support farmers and their communities improving livelihoods, productivity and water quality. The MRCTI alliance is an exciting opportunity to promote nutrient reduction in food procurement practices across the 10 Mississippi River basin states," explained Brittini Furrow, Senior Director of Global Sustainability for Walmart, pictured left, first column.

MRCTI has also partnered with USGS, Upper Mississippi River Basin Association, American Water, and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition to support this work.

Disaster Preparedness



The Mississippi River has sustained significant storm impact since the start of 2016. Louisiana Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser (pictured left), outlined the impacts of historic August flooding to MRCTI mayors urging that states and cities partner for more preparedness and recovery resources. The Lt. Governor explained that as much water feel on the Baton Rouge area as is carried by the Mississippi River over an 18

-day period. *Continued on next page.*

“Cape Girardeau, MO has seen an all-time high flood level. Three-fourths of Mississippi was impacted by flood water effecting 12 million people,” explained Mayor Errick Simmons of Greenville, MS.

But, it’s not just flooding. Minnesota heat indices climbed above 100 degrees at the end of July. We’ve had over 45,000 homes damaged or destroyed in Louisiana since March,” said Mayor Richard Lee of Port Allen, LA just across the River from Baton Rouge, LA.

MRCTI mayors, asked FEMA to improve their process for the application of disaster resources. According to Mayor Richard Lee of Port Allen, LA, “We need to make it easier for states and cities to treat climate impacts with disaster mitigation resources as they occur – at the regional level.” MRCTI recommends that FEMA make updates to the program and allow for broader multi-state projects to meet climate change at the scale it is happening – throughout the ten-state corridor.



Greenville Mayor Errick Simmons details disaster impacts on the River during

MRCTI Hosts National Geographic Role-Out



MRCTI hosted the launch of the Mississippi River Geotourism MapGuide website in partnership with National Geographic Maps, the Mississippi River Collaborative, the Big River Strategic Initiative and the Delta Regional Authority. The landmark project has taken two and a half years to plan and execute and is a historically significant digital asset for everyone who visits or lives in the ten states along the Mississippi River.

The Geotourism MapGuide highlights the unique and authentic landscapes and resilient people of the Mississippi River that is the lifeblood of the economies along its banks and a unique melting pot of experiences not found anywhere else in the United States or across the world. It is designed to showcase to national and international audiences the diverse natural, cultural and historic attractions that define the many communities along the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River Geotourism MapGuide:

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- ◇ Is one of only 20 Geotourism MapGuide websites worldwide to date;
- ◇ Showcases more than 1,300 sites and travel experiences nominated by locals;
- ◇ Is a resource designed to improve local, rural economic development;
- ◇ Provides access to a niche national market of 65 million “geotravelers;”
- ◇ Provides a long-term resource for promoting the communities and culture along the Mississippi River.



Delta Regional Authority Chairman Chris Masingill signs Memorandum of Common Purpose with MRCTI and the Collaborative.

MRCTI entered into a Memorandum of Common Purpose with the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative. The Collaborative works to increase recognition of America’s Great River, its people, places and stories and to enhance all existing resources, and acquire funding for conservation and development. Signatories to the Memorandum include the Delta Regional Authority, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Big River Strategic Initiative, Great Rivers Greenway, and the Mississippi River Parkway Commission. *Continued on next page.*

MRCTI Corporate Advisory Board Seats New Members, Selects New Chair and Vice Chair

Mayor Bob Gallagher of Bettendorf, IA presided over the MRCTI Corporate Advisory Board (CAB) Breakfast at the Annual Meeting in Natchez, MS where three new members were seated and CAB leadership was selected.

The Big River Strategic Initiative and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) both came aboard the MRCTI CAB. Sarah Carlson of Iowa Practical Farmers (pictured right) accepted the appointment on behalf of the Coalition. Terry Eastin, Executive Director of the Big River Strategic Initiative and Bob Salmon, Senior Vice President of American Queen Steamboat took the seats for their respective organizations. The Big River Strategic Initiative is a collection of projects to activate and celebrate the Mississippi River and its surrounding landscape including the Big River Crossing. NSAC has joined the CAB to assist MRCTI with its effort to improve water quality through the promotion of sustainable agriculture practices by incentivizing the supply chain around such techniques. The first and second largest river cruise vessels on the Mississippi River are operated by the American Queen Steamboat Company. American Queen was recognized in 2014 and 2015 as the world's top river cruise line.

Mayor Gallagher also officially recognized SCF Marine as the new CAB Chair for 2016-17 and NSAC as the new Vice Chair. SCF Marine was represented by company president Tim Power. SCF pledged to work with MRCTI toward returning container movement to the Mississippi River.



Mississippi River Cities & Towns Offer Aid to Hurricane Impacted Communities, Make Recommendations for Better Disaster Preparedness

"As mayors of cities along the Mississippi River, the Hurricane Matthew devastation hits home for us. Our 'coasts' have many of the same vulnerabilities. In fact, within just the past ten months, cities and towns on the Mississippi experienced record flooding and record heat at a prolonged level," reflected Mayor Belinda Constant of Gretna, LA and MRCTI Co-Chair.

"Since January of this year, the Mississippi River Valley has sustained \$10 billion in impacts; this is becoming a more and more frequent pattern with escalating costs. We're becoming rather astute to this new normal and we believe we can present some credible recommendations on how to mitigate these disasters better," stated Mayor Chris Coleman, Mayor of St. Paul, MN and MRCTI Co-Chair. *Continued on next page.*



Bettendorf, IA Mayor Bob Gallagher is interviewed after the MRCTI Quad City press conference. Below, Riverdale, IA Mayor Sonya Paddock discusses disaster recovery with IA Congressman Dave Loebsack.



“Mayors up and down the Mississippi River stand ready to offer assistance to hurricane impacted areas just as we did in the wake of Hurricane Katrina,” stated Mayor Bob Gallagher of Bettendorf, IA.

MRCTI has urged FEMA to rethink their pre-disaster mitigation program criteria, which is currently constructed to be state specific. In light of recent natural disasters, it has become evident that this policy is limiting the region’s ability to effectively respond to the impacts.

“We need to make it easier for states and cities to treat climate impacts with disaster mitigation resources as they occur – at the regional level,” recommended Mayor John Thodos, of East Moline, IL

“We are approaching disaster resilience from a ‘natural process’ point of view by giving the River room to ebb and flow as well as absorbing risk on-site instead of pushing more water down river to the next city,” explained Mayor Frank Klipsch of Davenport, IA.

Those cities offering mutual aid to hurricane-ravaged communities include:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| St. Paul, MN | St. Louis, MO |
| La Crosse, WI | Memphis, TN |
| Davenport, IA | Greenville, MS |
| Bettendorf, IA | Gretna, LA |
| Quincy, IL | |



Helena-West Helena, AR Mayor Jay Hollowell (3rd from R) stands with AR Governor Asa Hutchinson during the ribbon cutting of the Big River Crossing in West Memphis, AR.

Longest Recreation Bridge Links AR and TN across the Mississippi

MRCTI Executive Committee members Mayor Strickland of Memphis, TN and Mayor Hollowell of Helena-West Helena, AR participated in the Big River Strategic Initiative’s opening of the Big River Crossing on October 22.

The Big River Crossing is a \$17.5 million pathway over the Harahan Bridge. The project restores the original 1917 automobile route adjacent to the active rail line on historic Union Pacific cantilevered truss bridge. The automobile

route has been transformed for pedestrian traffic.

When completely linked, the Big River Crossing will ultimately make possible the second longest Mississippi River trail. This is all part of a larger effort to have one alignment of trail from headwaters to gulf that does not use roadways.

“The Mississippi River has more than 50 state parks, 60 national historic landmarks, 50 interpretive centers, 20 scenic overlooks, and 124 mayor-lead municipalities. The more we can connect all these attractions, the better,” said Mayor Hollowell speaking at the event.



Pictured L to R: Mayors Jo Anne Smiley of Clarksville, MO; Tom Thompson of Grafton, IL; Francis Slay of St. Louis, MO; James Spann of Hartford, IL; U.S. DOT MARAD Administrator Paul 'Chip' Jaenichen,; Dru Buntin, Executive Director of the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

MRCTI Awarded DOT Grant

The U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration announced the awarding of Marine Highway Grants for the Mississippi River. Though the program is national, many of the grants have been awarded to projects on the Mississippi River signifying the incredible importance of the waterway. Further, of the six projects that are receiving grant funds, five are for container-on-barge. Grantees include a planning grant for a partnership led by the Port of St. Louis, the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative, the Inland River Port & Terminal Association, and the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association to build the container economy for the Mississippi River and work with freight forwarders to offer the Mississippi River as a container option.

“The Mayors of the Mississippi River have been working to build a sustainable economy for the waterway and the

return of container movement on the River is big part of that effort,” said Mayor Francis Slay of St. Louis. “It is essential that we invest in integrated, multi-modal transportation systems that support the efficient movement of freight and people throughout this country,” says Maritime Administrator Paul “Chip” Jaenichen.

MRCTI Welcomes New Operations

Manager Emily LaRosa has been brought-on as MRCTI’s new Operations Manager. Emily served as the Association’s first intern in 2013 and has returned with a degree from Carnegie Mellon University as well as account management experience from 3 firms.



MRCTI Awarded Largest Foundation Grants To Date

This fall, the Initiative was awarded a two-year grant from both the Walton and McKnight Foundations. These grants comprise the largest combined sum ever allocated to the Association since it began in 2012. The grants will go to support MRCTI’s water quality work as part of the Association’s Clean Water Program announced at the MRCTI Annual Meeting in Natchez, MS this September. Mayors have worked closely with Walton since 2012 and McKnight since 2014 to build the association and create capacity for the Mayors to reduce nutrient loading.

Mayors Set to Meet in DC

Mayors will gather in Washington, DC Feb 28-March 2, 2017 to make a critical push for valuable infrastructure investment from the incoming administration. Mayors have set both natural and conventional infrastructure as a priority and will meet with Washington leaders to devise a plan forward. The Phoenix Park is serving as the Capitol Meeting headquarters.

