

Mississippi River Equity Vision

The Mississippi River Equity Vision (Mississippi REV) outlines priorities that support the community in reaching the aspirational state. These priorities are not intended to be ranked. The numerical value by each priority does not portray an order of importance or significance. The priorities are intended to illustrate the broad scope of work that lies ahead for the Quad Cities region. Additionally, the breadth of priorities illustrates unique opportunities for a wide variety of stakeholders to engage in the work that will be needed to fulfill the goal of a clean and sustainable Mississippi River Basin.

Some priorities may naturally align with some stakeholders who are already doing environmental work, while others may seem like uncharted territory. Nevertheless, the goal is to garner wide community support with individuals and organizations that unite around varied and different priorities to have a collective impact in the years to come. Not one person or organization can fulfill all of the stated priorities; it will take collaboration and mutual respect to reach our desired outcomes.

Equity Statement

Equity, inclusion and belonging are paramount to the success of sustainable solutions for our community, specifically as it relates to clean river initiatives. The work of the Clean River Advisory council is anchored in ensuring solutions are derived from, supported by and/or executed with BIPOC communities. Our work honors the thought leadership of all community members and centers voices that have been historically marginalized. To achieve a more equitable aspirational state for our region, we uplift the voices and lived experiences of communities who have been disproportionately impacted by environmental issues. Our biggest hope is to inspire all community members to consider those whose experiences are different from their own as we seek to create a more inclusive conservation community and more dynamic conservation systems.

Statement of Purpose

The Clean River Vision, referred to herein as the Mississippi River Equity Vision, is designed to cast the future aspirational state of: the Quad Cities Region and its Mississippi River Basin the communities impacted and connected to the river basin and to underscore the significance of culture, wellness and sense of belonging in and around the Mississippi River.

Furthermore the Mississippi River Equity Vision creates a shared vision that serves as a guidepost for the future activity of the following stakeholders:

- environmental organizations
- Individuals
- corporations
- communities and neighborhoods
- local government and municipalities
- schools and education institutions
- recreational enthusiasts
- youth and all of those who stand to benefit from clean and sustainable river water

Additionally, the intention of this work is to increase the alignment of environmental nonprofit organization priorities and municipal action plans for the Quad Cities Riverfront and to build community will toward solutions that are mutually beneficial for all members of this community and the river itself. We also seek to reinforce the Indigenous mindset that water is life.

Scope

The Mississippi River Equity Vision is not an action plan. The Mississippi River Equity Vision is a document designed to shape the way the Quad Cities region thinks about the river. The hope is that this thinking will impact how the collective whole speaks and acts. The Mississippi River Equity Vision is aspirational to the extent that neither the Clean River Advisory council nor the Mississippi River Equity Vision have the capacity to execute comprehensive interventions or solutions, nor does the C-RAC or Mississippi River Equity Vision have authority over community resources that ultimately impact programs, services or efforts regarding the Mississippi River Basin.

As with any aspiration or vision, the priority is to connect stakeholders to our co-constructed desired state. We expect to accomplish this through community engagement activities that will be endorsed by the Clean River Advisory council and a designated Communications and Community Engagement subcommittee. The subcommittees will consist of C-RAC members and community members who have expressed an interest in advancing the goals of the C-RAC. This document, hereinafter seeks to cast the vision and provide tangible, yet aspirational, priorities that convey our goals in a manner that supports stakeholders in aligning their work toward a shared cause—a clean and sustainable Mississippi River Basin that incorporates the lived experiences of all Quad Citizens, particularly those whose voices have been underrepresented and historically excluded, including BIPOC community members.

Overarching Goals & Objectives

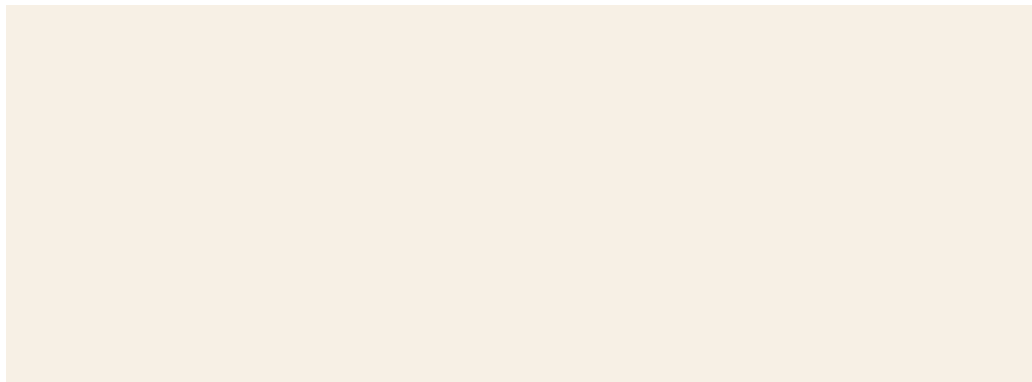
Priority #1- Zero Pollution Mindset

ASPIRATION: A first-in-class clean river community with a zero pollution mindset.

Interventions that support this priority might include:

- River and riverfront clean ups
- Increased access to recycling and trash receptacles
- Execution or advocacy of local ordinances being adopted that penalize individuals and corporate entities for littering or pollution (improving enforcement of existing penalties)
- Education campaigns and promotion of less environmentally impactful chemicals in homes and gardens
- Work with farmers for low pesticide and herbicide solutions.
- Advocacy for and incentives to reduce commercial plastic and styrofoam use

This list provides examples of efforts that may reduce pollution and reinforces that position of this region as a zero pollution region. We recognize that zero pollution is an aspirational state and individuals, organizations, companies and industries can take immediate action to reduce pollutants that impact our environment, more specifically our Mississippi River.





Priority #2- Our River is a Cultural Amenity

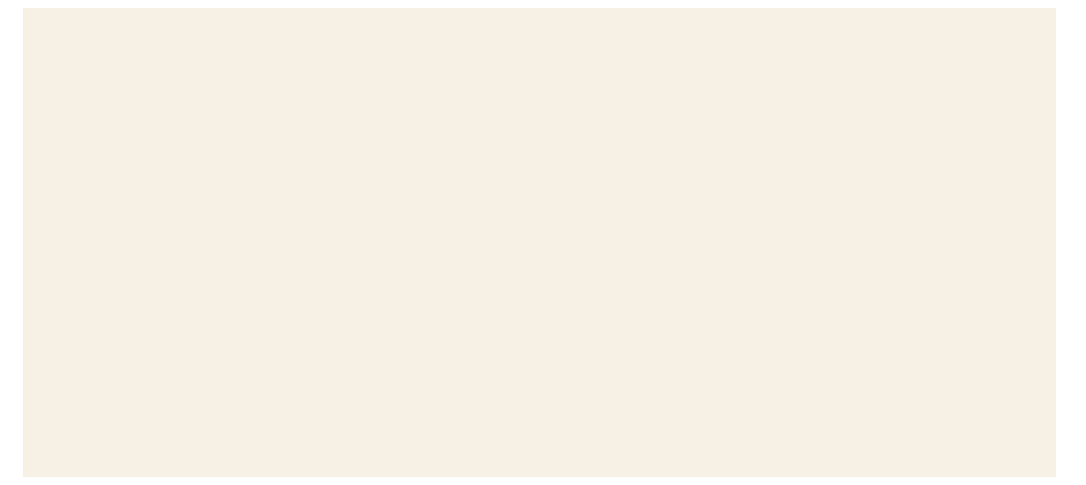
ASPIRATION: An accessible riverfront that centers current cultures and historic voices of the ancestors of the region.

Interventions that support this priority might include:

- Signage along the riverfront in multiple languages
- Signage along the riverfront that pays homage to the cultural and/or environmental contributions of BIPOC communities.
- Signage that educates river goers about the natural habitat and the role nature-based solutions play in keeping the water clean
- Riverfront tours that tell the authentic stories of BIPOC communities and their contributions to the region
- Guided educational tours in multiple languages that share heritage narratives and incorporate nature based solutions
- Programs that emphasize land acknowledgment of the numerous Indigenous peoples who have and currently live in the community



While this list is not exhaustive, it provides examples of efforts that may center BIPOC communities in the riverfront with the hopes of positioning underrepresented communities in engaging and leading clean river efforts.



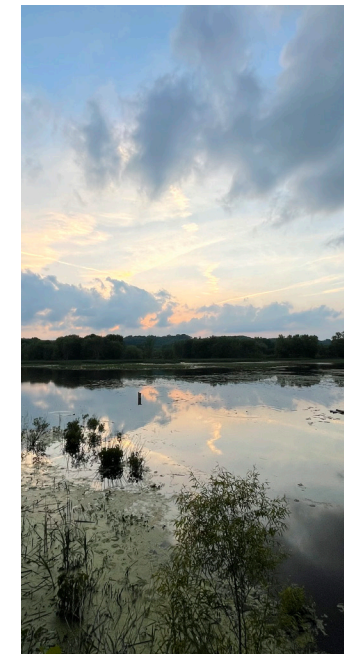
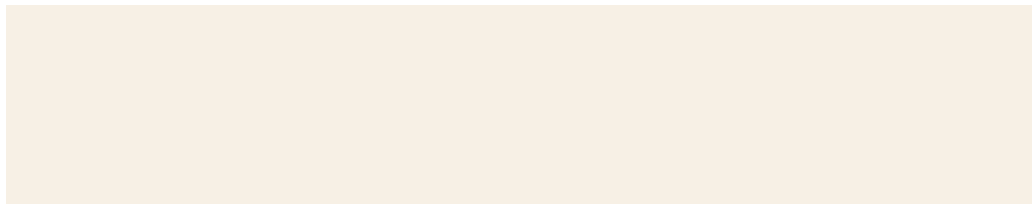
Priority #3- Renowned for Water Quality and Wildlife

ASPIRATION: We are known for our water and wildlife quality and the resurgence of species that are native to the Mississippi River Basin.

Interventions that support this priority might include:

- Procurement and planting of deep rooted native plants that mitigate flooding.
- Planting of aquatic vegetation that provide food and shelter for aquatic life and improve the clarity of the water
- Programming that tracks wildlife species and provides reports and guidance to organizations actively engaged in conservation and clean water efforts.
- Programming that tracks water quality and provides reports and guidance to organizations actively engaged in conservation, clean water initiatives and reciprocity.
- Innovative and nature based solutions that test and treat water with positive impacts to improve water quality.
- Projects or programs considering scalable solutions to improve water quality with the intended purpose of resurgence of aquatic and wildlife.
- Projects that increase the number of rain gardens to reduce flooding

While this list is not exhaustive, it provides examples of efforts that may support achieving the goal of promoting improved water quality conditions to support the re-emergence of aquatic and wildlife. The sooner individuals and organizations prioritize this work the greater the impact our region will have on improving aquatic life and wildlife resurgence.





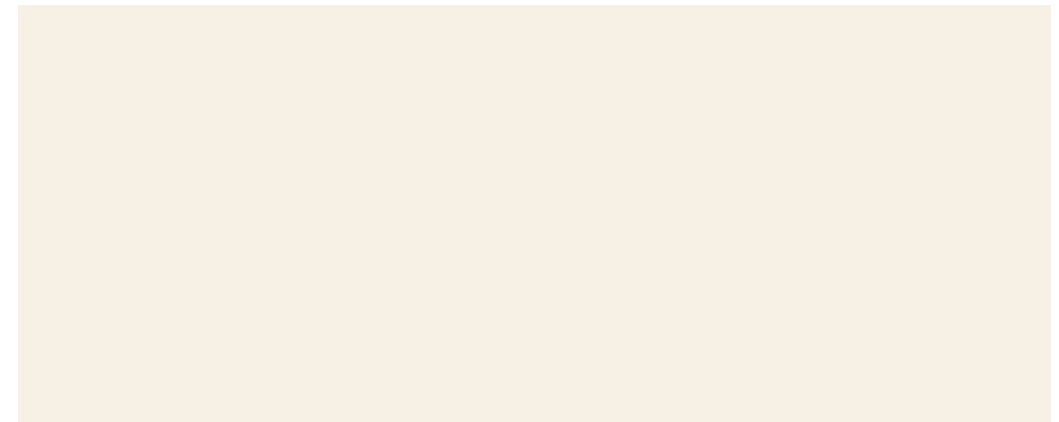
Priority #4- Unity and Coordinated Governance

ASPIRATION: Our unique geography as a bi-state region is our asset that has positioned the region for federal resources based on strong federal congressional support. We are united around a clean river from a local governance perspective with policies, regulations and advocacy that reflects our unity.

Interventions that support this priority might include:

- Advocacy efforts that consider state and/or federal designation that protect the Quad Cities Mississippi River Basin
- Strategic planning that aligns the Quad Cities regional riverfront development plans with an emphasis on sustainability, not just commercial development.
- Local governments allocate shared resources to enhance systemic conservation approaches that are mutually beneficial for the Quad Cities riverfront region and/or reduce flooding
- Advocacy that considers multi-jurisdictional or multi-state agreements related to water quality and/or downstream impact

While this list is not exhaustive, it provides examples of efforts that may support achieving the goal of intergovernmental approaches and inter-governmental resource sharing that aligns with clean river outcomes.



Priority #5- Youth and BIPOC Groups Empowered and Connected to the River

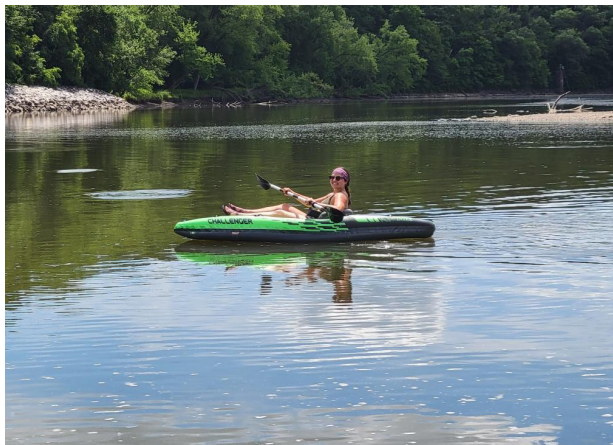
ASPIRATION: Our community, particularly youth and BIPOC groups, are educated on and empowered by their connection to the river and leading programming that positively impacts and disrupts traditional Western practices.

Interventions that support this priority might include:

- Development of or sharing of curriculum that educates youth and BIPOC communities on environmental and conservation issues related to the Mississippi
- Community engagement that includes educating communities disproportionately impacted by flooding, contaminated water or use of pesticides.
- Programming that introduces youth and BIPOC communities to career opportunities in the environmental or green sector.
- Programming that shares the historical and present-day contributions of BIPOC to agriculture, farming and environmental work in the Quad Cities region and beyond
- Programming that supports education on and connecting BIPOC communities to federal and state resources available to those who are interested in farming and environmental work
- Community information sessions conducted in designated neighborhoods that are densely populated by BIPOC to support ongoing environmental education
- Programming that connects people and families to a greater understanding of the Mississippi river, sustainability and current environmental conditions

While this list is not exhaustive, it provides options for consideration of strategies community members can immediately implement to align their work toward the Mississippi River Equity Vision vision.





Priority #6- Safe for Recreation, Spirituality and Wellness

ASPIRATION: Our Mississippi River Basin is safe, known and highly sought out locally and nationally for recreation, spirituality and wellness.

Interventions that support this priority might include:

- River water safety classes.
- Educational resources used to inform residents about flood water contamination and flood reduction strategies
- Artistic performances and exhibitions along the river
- Open water swimming lessons.
- Multi-generational events and programs that host recreational activity for all age demographics
- Organized yoga, meditation or interfaith and spiritual ceremonies at the river
- Indigenous storytelling along the riverfront and/or water ceremonies for healing
- Exercise courses taught along the riverfront.
- Water listening classes to guide neuronal wave
- Interfaith programming expanded at the river
- Fishing instructional classes and competitions
- Other activities that increase visitorship and stewardship of the river including increased access to lighting and nightlife activities and associated safety amenities (i.e. emergency buttons)
- Making natural home and body products that do not adversely impact water quality and wildlife species.

Please note, this is an aspirational state. While some activity for recreation, spirituality and wellness can immediately be deployed, not all efforts can begin until water conditions improve. Furthermore, individuals and organizations can act now to begin to execute ideas that support the Quad Cities Region's aspirational state.

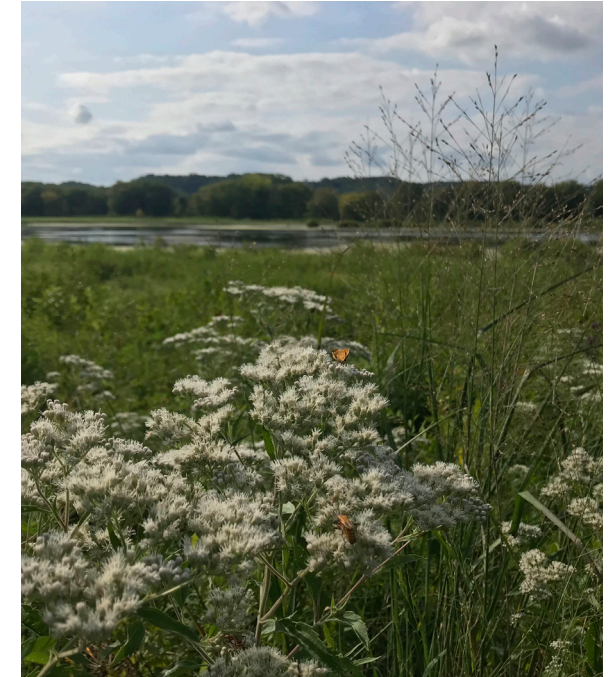
Priority #7-Indigenous and Western Practices

ASPIRATION: Our clean river solutions are a balance of respecting Indigenous practices that resulted in clean and sustainable water and Western, scientific practices that prioritize the preservation of natural resources.

Interventions that support this priority might include:


- Restoration and expansion of riparian areas and ecological corridors
- Education to farmers on the importance of planting native plants to improve water quality
- Education to farmers and local communities on Indigenous practices associated with a sustainable, mutually beneficial river
- Advocacy or educational materials that supports respect of natural resources and native/Indigenous land
- Activities that reduce turbidity and restore drinkability of the Mississippi River basin and its tributaries.
- Education for farmers on regenerative agricultural practices
- Activities that promote and result in restoration of native plants that benefit native wildlife including Monarch butterflies, Bob White quail and Rusty Patched bumblebee.

While this list is not exhaustive, it provides options for consideration of strategies that can support the execution of this shared vision. Furthermore, individuals and organizations can act now to begin to execute ideas that support the Quad Cities Region's aspirational state.



New Legislation Passed in Louisiana

Immediately after the levees broke, the presumption—made in haste in a complex environment—was that the commissioners of the Orleans Levee Board (OLB) were not paying enough attention to flood protection and were, therefore, partly responsible for the flood disaster. So Congress, with relative speed, ordered the creation of a single state agency to be the local sponsor to liaison with the federal Army Corps. In response, the State of Louisiana created the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA), in 2006.




At about the same time, members of the New Orleans Business Council spearheaded the creation of a new "Levee Authority" that would replace the five levee boards governing the Greater New Orleans region. The legislation was intended to 1) remove distractions, 2) replace parochial flood control with regional flood control and 3) require board commissioners to have professional expertise.

While no causal link has been shown to exist between the pre-Flood OLB and the levee breaches, few would disagree that a new form of levee board might be needed. In 2006, more than 80% of Louisiana voters expressed a desire to enact legislation creating a new, empowered authority. Ruthie Frierson led the campaign to pass the legislation. Ultimately, two levee board authorities were created, each with jurisdiction on opposite sides of the Mississippi River. ✦

Lawsuits Filed Since the Flood

Numerous class action lawsuits were filed against the Army Corps of Engineers after the levees broke. Federal Judge Stanwood Duval consolidated them into two cases. The MR-GO lawsuit alleged that the Corps was negligent in its maintenance of the 76-mile shipping channel.



Priority #8- Funding Sustainability

ASPIRATION: Our community is committed to sustainable solutions that impact people from all walks of life. As such, appropriate financial resource allocation is fundamental to the sustainability of efforts that support enhancing the water quality and the improvement of conditions for our precious natural resources.

Interventions that support this priority might include:

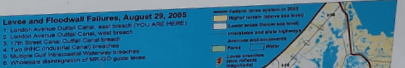
- Earning a state park designation that allows resources to be allocated to comprehensive conservation solutions
- Coordinated and unified governmental efforts that prioritize state and federal funding for clean river initiatives in the Quad Cities region
- Increased philanthropic dollars that support existing and/or new nature based solutions
- Increased access and deployment of federal resources in the Quad Cities as evident by funding from Inflation Reduction Act, Justice 40 Initiative funding and/or other federally designated programs that advance environmental justice and prioritize disadvantaged and historically marginalized populations.
- Leverage existing or newly formed public-private partnerships to access federal grants

New Legislation that Made the American People Safer

55% of the U.S. population lives in counties protected by levees. Due directly to the levee breaches in New Orleans, improvements to levee design, construction and maintenance were made nationwide.

1. Congress directed the Army Corps to conduct a nationwide assessment of levees. More than 14,000 levee miles were identified.
2. Congress passed the first ever National Levee Safety Act.
3. The Army Corps issued new guidelines for inspecting and certifying federal levees. Levee inspections are now more uniform, more robust and more frequent in every state.
4. Congress enacted legislation impacting how the Army Corps handles feasibility studies for levee improvements and requiring peer review of projects costing over \$40 million.
5. Perhaps most importantly, the Army Corps issued new guidelines for building levees and flood walls. Working with the nation's civil engineers, the Corps rewrote the manuals used to build new structures worldwide, including incorporating the risk of future hurricanes combined with the expected effects of rising sea levels.

While the 2005 levee breaches were not a shining moment for civil engineering, they were pivotal to American history



A thorough evaluation of existing resources may need to be prioritized to establish baselines for current funding in the region. Additionally, the coordination of funding of existing nonprofit organizations who are working on similar projects would be leveraged for state, federal or larger national philanthropic organization funding.