Background and History

In 1986 the United States Congress as part of the Water Resources Development Act declared the Upper Mississippi River System both a nationally significant **ecosystem** and **commercial navigation system.** Also authorized in this legislation was the establishment of a long-term monitoring program to track the ecological health of the river carried out by the United States Geological Survey and other partners. A summary of the first 20 years of data collection can be found in Appendix A. The forest resource was found to be significantly altered from before European settlement when much of the floodplain was forested. This decreasing trend could be accelerating due to die off from the 1993 flooding and inadequate growth of new trees as existing trees mature and die.

In 2000 many partners interested in the fulfilling this Congressional mandate of maintaining the Upper Mississippi River as both a significant ecosystem and navigation system developed a strategy for the river called "A River That Works, and a Working River." The overall goal of this strategy was to obtain public support, congressional appropriations, and public and private leadership to operate and maintain the ecological health of the Upper Mississippi River system. To some extent this has been achieved by the passage of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007directing the Secretary the Army to undertake navigation improvements and restoration of the ecosystem for the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois River System. However achieving these goals will take the cooperation and resources of many partners.

Another driver in regards to the Upper Mississippi River system is the existence of a hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico. This large area of low oxygen levels threatens marine life and could significantly alter the biology of the region. The goal of the "Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan 2008" (http://www.epa.gov/msbasin/actionplan.htm) is, subject to available resources, reduce the 5 year running average areal extent of the Gulf of Mexico hypoxic zone to less than 5,000 square kilometers by 2015. An analysis of the 2001-2005 data found that 39% of the nitrogen load and 26% of the phosphorus load comes from the Upper Mississippi River system.

The US Forest Service, Northeastern Area, State and Private Forestry analyzed what was happening along the river and recognizing that a healthy forest ecosystem could play a significant role in addressing the many ecological issues partnered with the Midwest State Foresters to form the **Upper Mississippi Forest Partnership.**

Introduction
The State Foresters of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin and the Forest Service's Northeastern Area recognize the role that trees and forests play in solving ecological problems in the Upper Mississippi River Watershed. They also understand that, individually, each state would have a limited ability to correct problems within the watershed. Therefore, they have joined together to form the Upper Mississippi River Forestry Partnership.

Vision
It is the vision of the Upper Mississippi River Partnership to have forestry interests working together within the watershed to correct natural resource problems. The Partnership will create a vehicle for the agencies and organizations to support common goals and complete projects to promote the protection and restoration of working forests to improve water quality within the watershed and ultimately the Gulf of Mexico.

Mission
Provide solutions to environmental problems in the Upper Mississippi River watershed through targeted efforts in tree and forest restoration, protection, and sustainable forest management.

UPPER MISSISSIPPI
FOREST PARTNERSHIP

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Watersheds