



Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative

2013 Progress Report

MRBI

Natural Resources Conservation Service



Overview

The Mississippi River is North America's longest river, flowing over 2,300 miles through America's heartland to the Gulf of Mexico. The Mississippi River Basin supplies drinking water, food, employment, and recreation for millions of people, as well as critical wildlife habitat for diverse species.

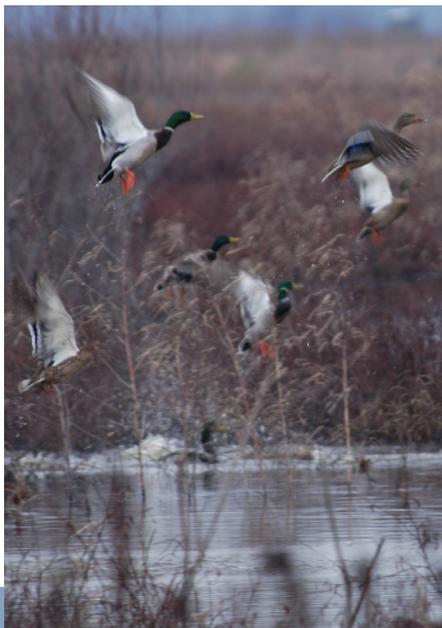
This vital river's elevated levels of nutrients and sediment can impair these uses and ultimately impact the health of the Gulf of Mexico. To address agricultural sources of nutrients and sediment to the river, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) identified the need for additional conservation in the Mississippi River Basin as a top priority.

Through the 13-state Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI), initiated in 2010, NRCS and its partners work with farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners to implement conservation systems that improve water quality while maintaining or increasing agricultural productivity. Small watersheds identified as significant contributors of nutrients and sediment to the river were given priority, allowing targeted implementation of conservation practices to achieve the best results to the river and to the Gulf of Mexico.

Funding

- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP)
- Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

CCPI played a critical role in the success of MRBI. CCPI used a competitive process to select strong partnership projects with the ultimate goal of getting additional conservation on the ground. Between Fiscal Years 2010 and 2012, NRCS selected



99 MRBI CCPI projects in 54 priority watersheds. An additional 24 projects have been funded through WREP, aimed at restoring wetland habitat to protect bird and fish species, prevent sediment and nutrients from entering waterways, and mitigate flooding.

Results

In Fiscal Year 2013, MRBI partners and producers also took advantage of NRCS's newly released national activity standards for edge-of-field monitoring. MRBI watersheds received half of all contracts and obligations for the new standard. Data collected from these stations will allow NRCS and its partners to assess the long-term impacts of targeted conservation on water quality.

Since 2010, NRCS and its partners have planned or implemented conservation systems on more than 800,000 acres throughout MRBI project areas. With approximately 4,500 active or completed contracts, NRCS has dedicated nearly \$170 million in financial assistance to producers. They will address nutrient and sediment losses, as well as improve irrigation efficiency in relation to water quality. In addition, since 2011, nearly 30,000 acres have been enrolled in 164 WREP agreements, with \$77.5 million from NRCS.

Including all financial and technical assistance, NRCS has invested nearly \$327 million in MRBI over the lifetime of the initiative—surpassing USDA Secretary Vilsack's goal of dedicating \$320 million from 2010 through 2013.

Conservation Beyond Boundaries

Arkansas
Kentucky
Illinois
Indiana

Iowa
Louisiana
Minnesota

Mississippi
Missouri
Ohio

South Dakota
Tennessee
Wisconsin

Fiscal Year 2013
Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative
NRCS Financial Assistance (FA) and Active and Completed Contracts*

State	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)			Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP)		
	Number of Contracts	Funding	Contract Acres	Number of Agreements	Funding	Contract Acres
Arkansas	463	\$27,185,891	112,055	11	\$14,547,054	6,066
Illinois	20	\$265,320	2,736	0	0	0
Indiana	43	\$2,307,509	13,864	1	\$468,865	82
Iowa	196	\$6,147,319	36,490	1	\$1,015,163	153
Kentucky	57	\$1,092,531	6,988	11	\$4,414,422	1,238
Louisiana	8	\$311,048	2,780	3	\$690,100	377
Minnesota	68	\$1,598,490	18,305	0	0	0
Mississippi	116	\$10,341,662	15,185	0	0	0
Missouri	290	\$9,779,796	31,824	0	0	0
Ohio	39	\$1,936,274	3,826	0	0	0
South Dakota	19	\$670,055	4,911	0	0	0
Tennessee	77	\$1,362,320	10,832	29	\$9,816,881	3,373
Wisconsin	19	\$150,794	1,909	0	0	0
Total	1,415	\$63,149,009	261,705	56	\$30,952,485	11,289



Utilizing the irrigation tailwater from other areas of the farm (above) has allowed a Richland Parish, Louisiana, farmer to lessen his impact on the local aquifer and increase crop production in fields that were struggling.



For More Information

For more information and updates about MRBI and other NRCS conservation efforts, please visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/initiatives/?cid=stelprdb1048200>

*Data source: Protracts for new enrollment 10/25/13. WREP data are preliminary.

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