

Corn Belt Ports See Historic Increases in Ecosystem Restoration Funding and Projects

February 22, 2023

Corn Belt Ports

The Ports Within the Corn Belt's Lock and Dam System

IL, MO, IA, WI & MN

MEDIA RELEASE #10



The Corn Belt Ports are the federally recognized Ports in the Heart of the Corn Belt above Locks and Dam 26 in the Upper Mississippi River System (The Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway). More simply put, they are the ports within the Corn Belt's Lock and Dam System. The Corn Belt Ports consist of the following four regional ports: 1) The Mid-America Port Commission (MAPC) (IL, MO & IA); 2) The Upper Mississippi River Ports (UMRP) (IL & IA); 3) The Illinois Waterway (ILWW) Ports; and 4) The Northern Grain Belt Ports (NGBP) (WI & MN). The primary purpose of the Corn Belt Ports is to help increase federal, state, non-profit organization, and business investment in the region.

Since federal recognition of the first Corn Belt Ports in 2020, the Congressional funding authorization in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) for the Upper Mississippi River Restoration (UMRR) Program has nearly tripled from \$33 million to now \$90 million over a 36-month period— its biggest jump ever in authorized funding levels.

The UMRR Program was the first environmental restoration and monitoring program on a large river system in the United States. The UMRR is one of the important efforts committed to ensuring the viability and vitality of the Upper Mississippi River System's (UMRS) diverse and significant fish and wildlife resources.

Congress originally authorized the UMRR Program in Section 1103 of the 1986 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) at \$18 million per year. In the 1999 WRDA, Congress increased the annual authorization to \$33 million and it remained at that level for two decades. The 2020 WRDA increased the authorized program funding from \$33 million to a combined \$55 million annually.

The FY 2023 Annual Federal Appropriations for the Upper Mississippi River Restoration (UMRR) Program is now at an all-time, historic high of \$55 million. However, with the most recent Dec 2022 WRDA funding authorization of \$90 million, we could see a further increase in the FY 2024 Annual Appropriations from Congress for the UMRR Program. More simply put, the UMRR program has grown to \$55 million in the FY 2023 appropriations bill, and now also has Congressional authorization to potentially increase that further to \$90 million in future annual appropriations.

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List of future planned UMRR projects in the Corn Belt Ports region (see UMRR Fact Sheet for details):

Mid America Port Commission (IL, MO, IA) (Total Multi-Year Cost \$95,379,680)

- Ted Shanks, Pool 24
- Clarence Cannon, Pool 25
- Gilead Slough, Pool 25
- Red's Landing Wetlands, Pool 25
- Yorkinut Slough, IL, Pool 26

Upper Mississippi River Ports (IL & IA) (Total Multi-Year Cost \$192,439, 822)

- Lower Pool 10 Island and Backwater Complex
- Pool 12 Overwintering
- Green Island, IA, Pool 13
- Lower Pool 13
- Beaver Island, Pool 14
- Steamboat Island, Pool 14
- Huron Island, Pool 18
- Keithsburg Division, Pool 18

Illinois Waterway Ports

- No Specific Future Projects Identified at Present

Northern Grain Belt Ports (WI & MN) (Total Multi-Year Cost \$84,638,000)

- Lower Pool 4, Big Lake
- Robinson Lake, MN, Pool 4
- Conway Lake, Pool 9
- Harpers Slough, Pool 9
- Reno Bottoms, Pool 9
- McGregor Lake, Pool 10

The Upper Mississippi River System (UMRS) is a nationally significant ecosystem as designated by the U.S. Congress in 1986. It provides habitat to 25% of native fish species and supports more than 300 bird species. Sustainability is the foundation of the Corn Belt Ports. The healthier the river's ecosystem, it will be able to better support multiple uses of the Mississippi River including the transportation of more than 60% of U.S. corn and soybean exports. We are glad to see the significant increase in UMRR funding. It is a Corn Belt Ports priority to ensure that all port regions are taking advantage of the UMRR Program. The UMRR Program is separate and distinct from the recently started Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP), which will also address aquatic ecosystem restoration requirements in the Corn Belt Ports region.

For more information on the UMRR and NESP Programs visit:

<https://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental-Stewardship/Upper-Mississippi-River-Restoration/> ; <https://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Missions/Navigation/NESP/>

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Featured Quotes:

Robert Sinkler, Executive Coordinating Director for the **Corn Belt Ports** said, “We knew that the federal recognition of the Corn Belt Ports would help attract increased federal, state, non-profit organization, and business investment in the region when we made the decision in 2019 to try and get them on the U.S. Ports map. But, we never anticipated these historic increases by Congress in both funding authorizations and appropriations for the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program. The larger Corn Belt Ports team is very grateful for the strong bipartisan Congressional support behind priorities that are important to our riverfront cities and counties along the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway.”

Denise Bulat, The Executive Director of the Bi-State Regional Commission between Illinois and Iowa, and the coordinator for the **Upper Mississippi River Ports (IL & IA)** collaboration, said, “Iowa and Illinois are the nation’s major producers and exporters of Corn and Soybeans. As much as we need reliable access to global markets, we need a healthy river ecosystem with thriving fish and wildlife. We are pleased to see historic increases in funding, and the nearly \$200 million of multi-purpose ecosystem restoration projects in the queue to be constructed for the Upper Mississippi River Ports area.”

Mike Norris, Chair of **Mid-America Port Commission (MAPC)**, said, “The Mid America Port commission is excited to see a significant increase of investment in the aquatic ecosystems within the MAPC region. The Upper Mississippi River is a nationally significant ecosystem, and this nearly \$100 million of planned UMRR projects will improve our aquatic ecosystems, and support our regional economy.”

Peter Fletcher, Executive Director, La Crosse Area Planning Committee stated, “As anticipated, the federal recognition of **Northern Grain Belt Ports** is attracting new investment in the region at every level. We are very pleased to be a major recipient of the increased UMRR funding that will enhance the environment. These projects will improve aquatic ecosystems and provide dozens of well-paying jobs.”

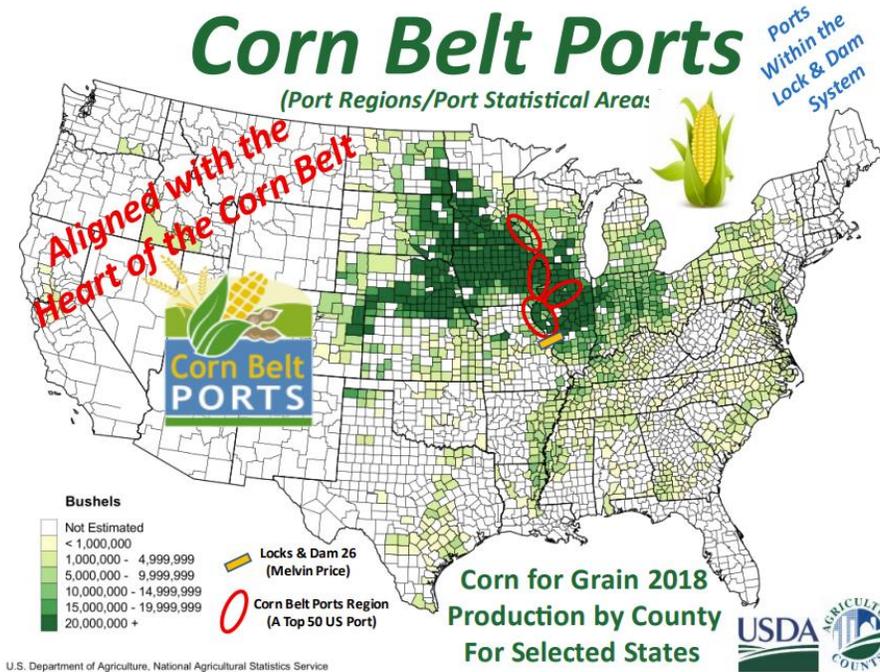
Dan Silverthorn, the long-time Chairman of the Board for the Heart of Illinois Regional Port District on the Illinois Waterway said, “Though we are very happy for a significant increase of funding for the UMRR program which is an important part of a working river system... Our attention will be focused on removing barriers to delivering ecosystem restoration projects on the Illinois Waterway which will benefit both people and nature. The **ILWW Ports** rank 18th in the nation as a dry bulk tonnage port, and with that success, we also need to address the aquatic ecosystem health of the Illinois Waterway.”

Roger Viadero, Director of **Western Illinois University’s Institute for Environmental Studies** and Chair of Western’s Ph.D. Program in Environmental Science said, “This increased investment in restoring the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway will enable us to remain a national and global leader in implementing interagency integrated water resources management at large watershed scale.”

Chris Smith, **Corn Belt Ports** Director of Operations stated “The Corn Belt Ports team is determined to eliminate barriers to delivery and assist stakeholders in each of the Corn Belt Ports to benefit from the UMRR program. Since current real estate parcels in the region are smaller and often in private ownership, we are planning to collaborate with non-profit organizations to identify smaller-sized ecosystem restoration projects in the underserved areas, especially in the Illinois Waterway Ports region. Identification of small-sized projects may be one way to help accelerate implementation.”

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A brief description of each regional Corn Belt Port is below:

The Mid-America Port Commission (MAPC) (IL, MO, IA) is defined by the confluence of the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers, and is centered on the Quincy-Hannibal, IL-MO area. It includes the I-72 intersection with both the Upper Mississippi River and the Illinois Waterway. The MAPC was first federally listed and ranked in 2020.

The Upper Mississippi River Ports (UMRP) (IL & IA) is managed by a collaboration of five regional planning agencies, is centered on the Quad Cities, and includes riverfront counties north to the port city of Dubuque. It includes the I-74, I-80 and I-280 intersections with the Upper Mississippi River. The UMRP was first federally listed and ranked in 2020.

The Illinois Waterway (ILWW) Ports (IL) are centered on the river cities of Peoria and Ottawa and includes ten counties within three regional planning agencies and encompasses 175.5 River Miles. The ILWW Ports include the Havana, Heart of Illinois, Illinois Valley, Ottawa, and Seneca Regional Port Districts. And, they partner with the Joliet Regional Port District to advance common ILWW goals. It includes the I-474, I-74, I-180, I-39, I-55, and I-80 intersections with the Illinois Waterway. The ILWW Ports was first federally listed and ranked in 2021.

The Northern Grain Belt Ports (NGBP) (WI & MN) are centered on the I-90 crossing of the Upper Mississippi River and includes the historic inland port cities of La Crosse and Prairie du Chien in Wisconsin, and the ports of Red Wing, Wabasha, and Winona in Minnesota. It includes 7 counties in Wisconsin and 4 counties in Minnesota. The NGBP works closely with the separate ports and terminals in the Minneapolis-St. Paul urban area to advance common regional goals. The NGBP was first federally listed and ranked in 2022.