

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 2, 2009

The Honorable Peter J. Visclosky, Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development
Committee on Appropriations
2362-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development
Committee on Appropriations
1001 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Visclosky and Ranking Member Frelinghuysen:

We want to sincerely thank you and the subcommittee for its past assistance and continued support for ecosystem restoration and navigation on the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway. We write to request that you continue to invest in these great American rivers and help address our current economic crisis by funding the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) at \$35 million in the Army Corps FY 2010 construction general account and the Environmental Management Program (EMP) at \$20 million.

Ecosystem restoration and investments in infrastructure along the Mississippi and Illinois rivers will help address the area's long-term economic, energy and environmental problems.

Congress authorized a groundbreaking dual-purpose plan for these rivers in the NESP in WRDA 2007. Construction of the measures intended for ecosystem enhancements under NESP would provide a healthier river for future generations while minimizing opportunities for invasive species to take over river systems that finger throughout the nation, wreaking havoc with our water quality and supply, as well as native fishes and other species who call our rivers home.

A new study shows that just one barge tow moves the same capacity as 1,050 trucks for moving grain, or 2,160 trucks for moving liquid cargo. It's easy to see the economic and environmental merits of river transportation, particularly with global concern over climate change and the energy challenges we're just starting to tackle as a nation. The efficient movement of our nation's economic anchors - coal, cement, petroleum products, steel, and other commodities will be crucial in this period of infrastructure investment, not to mention our nation's agricultural exports, one of the few positive balances in our nation's international trade. Moving over 625 million tons annually, worth over \$70 billion, our river system is an important piece of our nation's economy and transportation matrix.

NESP will integrate restoration of the river's important habitats with modernization of the navigation system to reduce barge traffic delays. However, we must begin now to implement this progressive program by appropriating funding for construction under NESP. This program

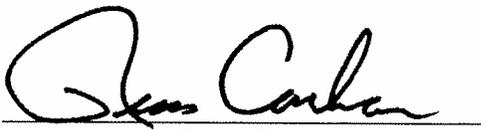
is supported by environmental groups, the commercial navigation industry, and agriculture and labor groups.

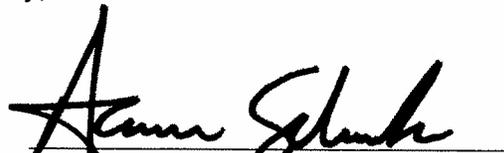
Ecosystem restoration activities implemented under NESP will expand on two decades of success under the Upper Mississippi River Environmental Management Program (EMP), which began in 1986. While EMP continues to protect wildlife and offset damages to the environment, we recognize the need to transition the Corps' ecosystem restoration functions from EMP to NESP. We believe this transition must be carefully structured to ensure that the gains made under EMP are not undone and, indeed, to build on that success with the additional authorities contained in NESP.

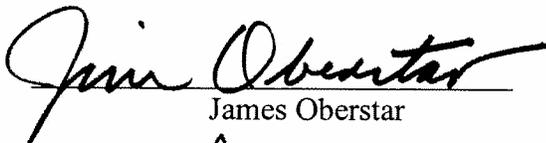
In order to accomplish this, we recommend that the Committee fund both programs in the FY 2010.

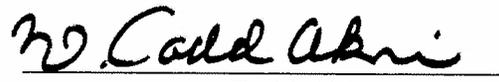
We again thank the Committee for its support of the health of the economy and the ecosystem of the Upper Mississippi River system, and for considering our request.

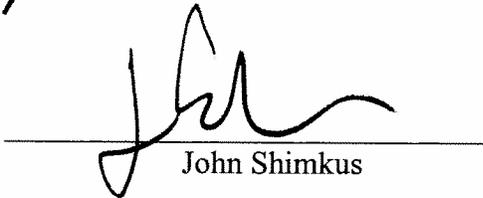
Sincerely,

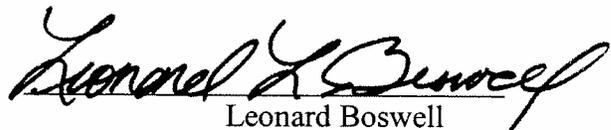

Russ Carnahan

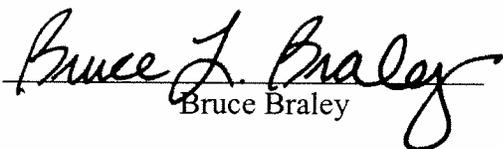

Aaron Shock


James Oberstar


Todd Akin


John Shimkus

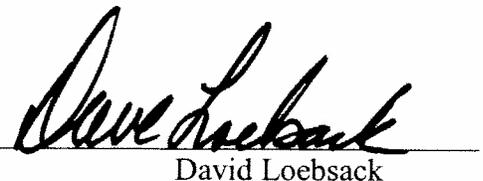

Leonard Boswell


Bruce Braley


Phil Hare


Deborah Halvorson


Keith Ellison


David Loebsack