Mississippi River
Cities & Towns Initiative
An Association of United States Mayors
The Mississippi River, Her Time is Now 2022

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Media Contact:
Jim Gwinner, jgwinner@ls2group.com, 314-791-2774

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MRCTI Mayors Urge Passage of New River Restoration Project,
Support Ambassador Andrew Young's Vision to Make Corridor a National Priority

September 13, 2022, St. Louis, Missouri – Mayors of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative gathered this week for their 11th Annual Meeting in St. Louis to celebrate ten years of leading for Middle America and push Congressional efforts closer to fruition.

Our city is thrilled to host this year's MRCTI conference in Downtown St. Louis, and I am proud to be part of MRCTI and advocate for the most vulnerable of our Corridor. Together, mayors are lifting our region and making bold, innovative proposals that ensure historically disadvantaged populations are protected and benefit from the historic infrastructure opportunities offered over the next five years," said **Tishaura O. Jones, Mayor of St. Louis, MO**

MRCTI Mayors from nine states along the waterway came together to further Ambassador Andrew Young's vision to make the Mississippi River a national priority and thank Senator Boozman of Arkansas for his work with Mayors to include an ecosystem restoration program demonstration project for the lower Mississippi River. Titled *The Lower Mississippi River Demonstration Program* (Section 406), this project will provide $90 million for systemic living resource restoration efforts. Mayors also urged final passage of the measure by the whole Congress in the coming weeks.

"The sustainability of the Mississippi River Valley has world-wide implications we cannot ignore. I am proud to be working directly with the Mayors of MRCTI to achieve a national approach to more sustainably managing the most important river corridor on Earth," asserted **former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young**. "I also want to thank Senator Boozman for his project in WRDA which realizes a significant portion of my vision for a unified conservation approach at basin scale."

"This pilot project in the Senate-passed WRDA bill that I have worked on with the support of Mayors of the Mississippi River will allow communities and private entities to apply for federal assistance to help with conservation efforts. I'm excited about this new and important project and the potential to improve conservation along the Mississippi River. Mayors' voices have been critical in shaping this measure," said **John Boozman, United States Senator (AR).**

"Senator Boozman has shown vision, leadership and results in his work with Mayors and other partners to improve the resilience and reliability of our corridor through this new project in the Water Resources Development Act," emphasized **Kevin Smith, Mayor of Helena-West Helena, AR and MRCTI Arkansas State Chair**.

“The Upper Mississippi River has enjoyed an ecosystem restoration program for several decades but the Lower River Valley has not enjoyed such programmatic benefits. This effort with Senator Boozman will move us closer to realizing whole-river benefits for all our communities from Minnesota to Louisiana,” calibrated **Mayor James Sanders of Blytheville, AR**.

Though progress is being made, Mayors and Congressional champions pointed out that much more remains to give the Mississippi River the status it demands. The establishment of a national Mississippi River program, dedicated federal coordination resources across agencies, and a comprehensive Mississippi River management plan all comprise the work ahead.

“Senate, congressional, and national champions from multiple states are critical to making a unified vision for our region a reality. Simply put, the Mississippi River Corridor is America’s original Main Street and thus innovative proposals like the Andrew Young Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together Act should be given consideration,” emphasized **Errick Simmons, Mayor of Greenville, MS and Co-Chair of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative**.

“I am proud to have introduced The SMRT Act on behalf of my friend, Ambassador Andrew Young to assist with efforts, and grow the economy throughout the Mississippi River. By introducing this bill, it will provide funding opportunities to maintain the Mississippi River, which is vital to the State of Mississippi. The SMRT Act would provide up to $500 million per year for five years to fund grants and studies for maintaining the river,” explained **Bennie Thompson, United States Representative (MS)**.

“We still have work to do. We need to get Senator Boozman’s WRDA proposal to the President’s desk as soon as possible. Then, I look forward to working with the next Congress in 2023 to continue elevating the Mississippi River Valley in national policy,” said **Jim Strickland, Mayor of Memphis, TN and Co-Chair of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative**.

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The Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative is a coalition of 102 mayors from across the Mississippi River Basin, which spans nearly a third of the country. The Mississippi River provides drinking water to more than 20 million people and 50 cities. More than 60 billion gallons of fresh water is withdrawn from the river daily. The River’s resources support 1.5 million jobs and create $496.7 billion in annual revenue.