

# The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative Organizational Meeting



## MISSISSIPPI RIVER CITIES & TOWNS INITIATIVE ANNUAL MEETING BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA, SEPT. 12-14



### Agenda

### Title Sponsor:

Unless otherwise noted, all sessions and events are open to all mayors and officially invited attendees.  
Meeting services are located within the Radisson Country Inn & Suites, 927 Lake Shore Drive, NE, Bemidji, MN 56601.  
Check [www.mrcti.org](http://www.mrcti.org) frequently for Annual Meeting Agenda updates.

### September 12

#### Registration

10:00am – 6:00pm, Sanford Center, Main Lobby, 1111 Event Cetner Drive, NE

#### Shuttle from Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport to Bemidji

1:00pm – 4:30pm, Travel Coach will meet guests and Mayors at main terminal parking for transport to Annual Meeting host hotel. Please RSVP your seat via the Annual Meeting reservation link at [www.mrcti.com](http://www.mrcti.com)

## Opening Ceremony & Welcome Reception

### Opening Ceremonies, *Sponsored by the Red Lake Nation* [Attire: Casual]

6:00pm – 6:30pm, Red Lake Nation Wellness & Event Center, 15525 Mendota Avenue, Redby, MN 56670

For the first time, a portion of the Annual Meeting will be hosted by a First Nation. Join Mayors, federal officials, and the leaders of the Red Lake Nation at their new state-of-the-art event center for a truly immersive experience into the culture and heritage of the headwaters region. This is a no-alcohol event.

*Mayors and guests may gather in the Country Inn lobby at 5:20pm to board buses for a 30-minute ride to venue.*

*Welcome:* HON. JORGE PRINCE  
Mayor of Bemidji, MN  
MRCTI Host City

HON. DARRELL G. SEKI  
Chairman, Red Lake Nation  
First Nation Host

*Opening:* HON. JIM STRICKLAND  
Mayor of Memphis, TN  
MRCTI Co-Chair

HON. ERRICK SIMMONS  
Mayor of Greenville, MS  
MRCTI Co-Chair

<i>Ceremonies:</i>	<u>Grand Entry: Procession of States &amp; Nations</u>	
	FIRST NATIONS	FIRST NATIONS
	Entrance of Princesses and Braves	Presenting of Staffs & Flags
	BEMIDJI VFW POST 1260	FIRST NATIONS
	AMERICAN LEGION, RALPH GRACIE POST #14	Music Presentation
	Presenting of State Colors	Veterans, Exhibition Songs
<i>Singing of of National Anthems:</i>	BLAKE STAINES	FIRST NATIONS
	Department of Music	Anthems of the First Nations
	Bemidji State University	

### **Welcome Reception and Dinner, *Sponsored by the Red Lake Nation***

7:00pm – 8:30pm, Red Lake Nation Wellness & Event Center, 15525 Mendota Avenue, Redby, MN 56670  
Join Mayor Prince as he and the MRCTI Co-Chairs open the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative by recognizing and celebrating the First Nations of our sacred river and this beloved land.

<i>Opening:</i>	HON. JORGE PRINCE	HON. DARRELL G. SEKI
	Mayor of Bemidji, MN	Chairman, Red Lake Nation
	MRCTI Host City	First Nation Host
	HON. FARON JACKSON, SR.	HON. MICHAEL LAROQUE
	Chairman, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe	Secretary Treasurer, White Earth Nation
	First Nation Host	First Nation Host
<i>Signing:</i>	<u>MRCTI and First Nations Enter into Commitment for the Mississippi River</u>	
	HON. JORGE PRINCE	HON. JIM STRICKLAND
	Mayor of Bemidji, MN	Mayor of Memphis, TN
	MRCTI Host City	MRCTI Co-Chair
	HON. DARRELL G. SEKI	HON. FARON JACKSON
	Chairman	Chairman
	Red Lake Nation	Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
		HON. MICHAEL LAROQUE
		Secretary-Treasurer
		White Earth Nation

<i>Introduction:</i>	MIGDALIA LOYOLA MELÉNDEZ	BRADLEY HARRINGTON
	Deputy Chief of Staff, Public Engagement	Director of Tribal Relations
	Office of Governor Tim Walz (MN)	MN Department of Natural Resources

<i>Remarks:</i>	HON. LYNN TRUJILLO
	Senior Counselor to Secretary Haaland
	United States Department of the Interior

### **MRCTI Late Night, *Sponsored by Evolve Creative***

9:00pm – 11:00pm, The Tavern on South Shore, 929 Lake Shore Drive, NE, Bemidji, MN 56601  
Join MRCTI Co-Chairs and Bemidji hosts for extra celebration of this historic moment for the Mississippi River Corridor, its people, and its future.

September 13

**Registration**

7:30am – 5:00pm, Sanford Center, Main Lobby, 1111 Event Center Drive, NE

**Opening Breakfast Plenary: The Decade of the American City 2025 – 2035, Sponsored by the White Earth Nation [Attire: Outdoor Casual]**

8:00am – 9:00am, Lake View A, Sanford Center, 1111 Event Center Drive, NE

*Mayors and guests may proceed directly to the morning venue attached to the host hotel*

*Presiding: Bob Gallagher, Mayor of Bettendorf, IA, MRCTI Immediate Past Co-Chair  
Phil Stang, Mayor of Kimmswick, MO, MRCTI Missouri State Chair*

*Welcome:* HON. MICHAEL LAROQUE  
Secretary-Treasurer  
White Earth Nation

*Introduction:* HON. GEORGE FLAGGS  
Mayor of Vicksburg, MS  
MRCTI Mississippi State Chair

*Keynote:* A New Day for Infrastructure in America, If Cities Can Seize It  
HON. JOHN ROBERT SMITH  
Chairman  
Transportation for America

**SESSION I: THE STATE OF RESILIENCE ALONG THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, ARE WE GAINING GROUND?**

9:15am – 10:30am, Lake View A, Sanford Center, 1111 Event Center Drive, NE

*Moderating: Mitch Reynolds, Mayor of La Crosse, WI, MRCTI Wisconsin State Chair  
Jerry Koch, Mayor of Coon Rapids, MN*

*Presentation:* True Resilience Incorporates Multiple Solutions  
DAVID GOLDWATER  
Vice President, Stantec

*Discussion:* HON. JAIME PINKHAM  
Principal Dept. Asst. Sec. for Civil Works  
U.S. Department of Defense

COL. ERIC SWENSON  
Commander  
St. Paul District, USACE

ANDREW GOODALL, P.E., PMP  
NESP Regional Prog. Mgr.  
Rock Island District, USACE

*Proposal:* Developing A Mississippi River Compact  
HON. JOHN HOFFMAN  
Minnesota State Senate  
Chair, Health & Human Services Com

ALEXANDRA CAMPBELL-FERRARI  
Executive Director  
Center for Water Sec. & Cooperation

## Mayors' Press Conference

11:00am – 11:30am, Visit Bemidji Tourist Center, 300 Bemidji Avenue N, Bemidji, MN 56601

Mayor Prince, Mayor Strickland, and Mayor Simmons will convene a press conference to make several announcements regarding corridor-level developments led by MRCTI.

*Mayors and guests may board buses to press conference venue at the Sanford Center. Buses will then continue to the headwaters directly from the press conference for the rest of the day.*

*Presiding:* Jim Strickland, Mayor of Memphis, TN, MRCTI Co-Chair  
Errick Simmons, Mayor of Greenville, MS, MRCTI Co-Chair

*Introduction:* HON. JORGE PRINCE  
Mayor of Bemidji, MN  
MRCTI Host City

*Remarks:* RAFAEL PERALTA PROFESSOR JENNA JAMBECK, PhD  
North America Director College of Engineering  
United Nations Environment Programme University of Georgia

*Announcement of Partnership:* MARK ARMEN  
Founder and CEO  
Replenish: Enterprise Circularity Platform

<i>Announcement of Agreement:</i>	HON. DARRELL G. SEKI Chairman Red Lake Nation	HON. FARON JACKSON Chairman Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe	HON. MICHAEL LAROQUE Secretary-Treasurer White Earth Nation
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*Persistent Drought:* HON. MITCH REYNOLDS  
Mayor of La Crosse, WI

# Bemidji Shows Us the Mississippi From the Top

**MOST INCREDIBLE SIGHTS IN NORTH AMERICA**—Experience some of the best outdoor destinations our nation has to offer at the powerful and awe-inspiring birthplace of the mighty Mississippi. Rediscover why we put our mind, body, and strength into this work.

## **Lunch Plenary: States and Cities Working Together to Leverage Jobs Act/IRA Funding, Sponsored by the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe**

12:45pm – 1:50pm, Lake Itasca Amphitheater and Outdoor Banquet Area [Attire: Outdoor Casual]

*Mayors and guests will board buses from the press conference to Lake Itasca State Park. Buses will not return to the host hotel until later afternoon. Formal program at amphitheater will follow lunch.*

*Presiding: Sharon West Broome, Mayor of Baton Rouge, LA*

**Welcome:** HON. FARON JACKSON, SR.  
Chairman, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

**Introduction:** HON. MARK KUZMA  
Mayor of Ramsey, MN

**Presentation:** State & Cities Working Together to Leverage Historic Funding  
HON. SARAH STROMMEN  
Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources  
State of Minnesota

**Introduction:** HON. BELINDA CONSTANT  
Mayor of Gretna, LA  
MRCTI Louisiana State Chair

**Presentation:** The Importance of Subnational Work on the Global Stage  
AMBASSADOR NINA HACHIGIAN  
Special Representative for City and State Diplomacy  
U.S Department of State, Office of Global Partnerships

## **Tour of the Mississippi River Headwaters**

2:00pm – 3:15pm, Mary Gibbs Mississippi Headwaters Center, Shevlin, MN 56676

Mayor Prince, leaders of First Nations, and Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources invite Mayors and guests to experience one of the most powerful and iconic natural marvels of the world – the beginning of the Mississippi.

## **SESSION II: A NEW ERA FOR WATERSHED-SCALE CITY PARTNERSHIPS**

3:30pm – 4:45pm, University of Minnesota Lake Itasca Biological Station, Shevlin, MN 56676

*Moderating:* Mayor Melisa Logan, Mayor of Blytheville, AR  
Mayor Brad Bark, Mayor of Muscatine, IA

*Welcome:* JONATHAN SCHILLING  
Director, Lake Itasca Biological Station and Laboratories  
University of Minnesota

*Jobs Act, IRA* ELIZABETH “NENA” SHAW  
*Guidance:* Director, Resource Conservation and Sustainability Division  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

*Announcement:* New SRF Technical Assistance Partnership with Quantified Ventures  
BECCA TRUEMAN  
SRF Watershed Coordinator, Mississippi River Basin  
Quantified Ventures

*Introduction:* RAFAEL PERALTA JENNEY WENDT  
North America Director Plastic Waste Reduction Campaign Manager  
United Nations Environmental Programme Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative

*Presentation:* Final Report of First Plastic Pollution Initiative Data Collection Round  
PROFESSOR JENNA JAMBECK, PHD  
New Materials Institute, Circularity Informatics Lab  
College of Engineering, University of Georgia  
Morgan Stanley Plastic Waste Resolution Senior Researcher

*Announcement:* Equipping Cities with Tools They Need for Waste Management Infrastructure  
MARK ARMEN  
Founder & CEO  
Replenish: Enterprise Circularity Platform



**Host City Dinner: AN EVENING AT THE TOP OF THE RIVER, *Sponsored by Sanford Health, Paul Bunyan Communications* [Attire: Casual, Business Casual Optional]**

6:30pm – 8:00pm, Lake Side Ballroom, Sanford Center, 1111 Event Center Drive, NE

The City of Bemidji, partnering First Nations, and the State of Minnesota invite Mayors of the Mississippi River to gather for an incredible host city showcase dinner where guests will learn of a vital local project.

*Presiding:* Jim Strickland, Mayor of Memphis, TN, MRCTI Co-Chair  
Jorge Prince, Mayor of Bemidji, MN, MRCTI Annual Meeting Host City

<i>Welcome:</i>	GARY JOHNSON Incoming CEO Paul Bunyan Communications	TIM TERRILL Executive Director Mississippi Headwaters Board
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*Announcement:* SASKIA PARDAANS  
Senior Advisor  
Infrastructure & Water  
Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

*Showcase:* City of Bemidji Transformative Project  
SAM ANDERSON, PE  
City Engineer, Director of Public Works  
City of Bemidji

**MRCI 2021-23 Executive Committee Awards**

8:00pm – 9:00pm, Lake Side Ballroom, Sanford Center, 1111 Event Center Drive, NE

VISION, LEADERSHIP, RESULTS are the hallmarks of MRCTI member mayors. Join us in recognizing our best.

*2024 Annual* HON. SHARON WESTON BROOME  
*Mtg Preview:* Mayor of Baton Rouge, LA  
Immediate Past MRCTI Co-Chair

*Special* HON. SARAH STROMMEN  
*Recognition:* Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources  
State of Minnesota

<i>Recognition</i>	HON. JIM STRICKLAND	HON. ERRICK SIMMONS	COLIN WELLENKAMP
<i>of 2021-23</i>	Mayor of Memphis, TN	Mayor of Greenville, MS	Executive Director
<i>Exec Comm:</i>	MRCTI Co-Chair	MRCTI Co-Chair	MRCTI

September 14

**Registration**

7:30am – 10:30am, Sanford Center, Main Lobby, 1111 Event Cetner Drive, NE

**Corporate Advisory Board Breakfast, *Sponsored by Stantec, Otter Tail Power Company***

8:00am – 10:00am, Concordia Language Village, Korean Activity Building, Sup sogüi Hosu, 11380 Turtle River Lake Rd NE [Attire: Casual, Business Casual Optional]

*Buses will begin loading at Country Inn & Suites at 7:30am to transport mayors and guests to breakfast venue.*

*Presiding:* Belinda Constant, Mayor of Gretna, LA  
Scott Sherman, Mayor of Winona, MN

*Welcome:* MARY MAUS KOSIR  
Executive Director  
Concordia Language Village

<i>Greetings:</i>	DAVID GOLDWATER Vice President Stantec Corporation	TIMOTHY J. ROGELSTAD President Otter Tail Power Company	HON. MIKE THOMS Mayor Rock Island, IL
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*Presentation:* Corn Belt Ports – Federal and State Designation Achieved: How Can Cities Benefit  
ROBERT SINKLER  
Founder & CEO  
Riverside Global

HON. MIKE HALPIN State Senator (IL) 36 <sup>th</sup> Senate District of Illinois
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*Announcement:* Chair, Vice Chair, and New Members of MRCTI Corporate Advisory Board

<i>Transition:</i>	MARK BINSFELD Vice President J.F. Brennan Company Inc. MRCTI CAB Chair	NORA CORLEY Elkay Incoming MRCTI CAB Chair
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*Remarks:* TIM HIGHTOWER  
President & CEO  
Deconstruction Development Partners

**Break, 10:00am – 10:15am**



## MRCTI Business Meeting

10:15am – 12:00pm, Concordia Language Village, Korean Activity Building, Sup sogŭi Hosu, 11380 Turtle River Lake Rd NE [Attire: Casual, Business Casual Optional]

Mayors will meet in an open-door session to discuss new business brought before the Association. Mayors interested in hosting an annual meeting may also officially list their city as a candidate for the 2026 meeting.

*Presiding:* Jim Strickland, Mayor of Memphis, TN, MRCTI Co-Chair  
Cliff Berry, Mayor of Tiptonville, TN, MRCTI Secretary

*Remarks:* PROFESSOR BRENDA CHILD  
Northrop Professor of American Studies  
University of Minnesota College of Liberal Arts

*Revised Bylaws:* Adoption of Bylaw Changes Proposed by Executive Committee

*Motion:* Enactment of Formal Effort to Pursue Mississippi River Compact  
MRCTI membership will entertain a motion to formalize an effort to pursue a Mississippi River Compact for the ten-state corridor that will protect the freshwater resources of the Main Stem and sustain the environmental services provided by such resources.

*Introduction:* Large-Scale, Multi-City River Cruise Terminal Facility Buildout  
MRCTI Mayors will engage in a discussion to use Jobs Act funds available from the Delta Regional Authority and U.S. DOT to plan and implement new cruise terminal and multi-use facilities for our more economically distressed communities.

*Elections:* MRCTI CO-CHAIRS  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Remarks:* NEWLY ELECTED MRCTI CO-CHAIRS

*Nominations:* MRCTI 2026 Annual Meeting Host City Candidates  
Nominations will be accepted for a lower stem city to host the 2026 Annual Meeting. The Executive Committee will vote the winning candidate city in February 2024.

## Meeting Adjournment

12:00pm

## Concordia Bus Tour

12:15pm – 12:40pm, Concordia Language Village Campus

Mayors and guests remaining in Bemidji, for the afternoon as well as those going on the excursion can enjoy a brief bus tour of the Concordia Village campus on their way back to the host hotel. This tour does not require any stops or exits from the bus.

## Shuttle to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport

12:15pm, Concordia Language Village, Korean Activity Building, Sup sogŭi Hosu, 11380 Turtle River Lake Rd NE

**Excursion: Private Boat Tour of Lake Bemidji, Destination Ruttger's Historic Resort, Sponsored by First National Bank of Bemidji, Bemidji Chamber of Commerce** [Attire: Outdoor Casual; RSVP to [tlumas@mrcti.org](mailto:tlumas@mrcti.org)]

2:30pm – 7:00pm, Ruttger's Bay Lake Resort, 7598 Bemidji Road, NE, Bemidji, MN 56601



Imagine this spot and this view being your 'finish-line' to an already tremendous experience. Join Mayor Prince as your exclusive guide on-board a private chartered vessel across Lake Bemidji to one of the best kept secrets in the Mississippi River Corridor – Ruttger's historic resort. You will be treated to pre-dinner drinks and snacks before enjoying dinner all while taking-in sweeping vistas like the one above. Mayors and their plus-one only, please. RSVP to Tiara Lumas, MRCTI Operations Manager at [tlumas@mrcti.org](mailto:tlumas@mrcti.org).

*Mayors and their guest will meet in the Country Inn Lobby at 2:00pm to proceed to chartered vessel.*