

January 2020

# Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative

## Association of United States Mayors A 2020 Vision for Our Corridor



At podium: Barry Rassin, Immediate past President of Rotary International, announces collaboration with MRCTI.

## MRCTI, Rotary Launch Effort

### *Mississippi River Mayors and Rotary International Announce new Collaboration on Infrastructure*

Mississippi River Mayors and Rotary International have come together to restore natural and built infrastructure of the Corridor to enhance community resilience

Rotary International is a network of 1.2 million members within over 35,000 clubs world-wide. One of Rotary's core missions is to develop and improve communities and grow local economies through the restoration and sustainability of critical water infrastructure. Given the Mayors along the Mississippi share the same core mission and have a Rotary in al-

most every Mississippi River City that is part of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative (MRCTI), the two organizations are a perfect match to work together.

"Here in Memphis, our Rotarians are our neighbors, our friends, even members of our family. The Memphis Rotary will celebrate their 105th anniversary this year and in that time, they have become a constant presence in and companion to our city. Memphis Rotarians work on clean water

*Continued on page 4 under "New Effort with Rotary"*

### *Largest Reinsurer, Water Capital Firm, & River Cruise Line Join MRCTI Corporate Advisory Board*

Munich Reinsurance America, Sciens Capital, and American Cruise Lines all joined the MRCTI

Corporate Advisory Board at the Annual Meeting in Memphis. Sciens Capital proposed working with MRCTI to unleash part of \$600 million in philanthropy funding into the Mississippi River Corridor. Alexander Loucopoulos, Partner at Sciens Capital (pictured above left) discussed with Mayors on possible outlets to financial capacity to meet the Corridor's infrastructure need.



Raghuveer Vinukollu (pictured above center), lead on resilience for Munich Re America, presented on options for systemic reduction of risk throughout the Mississippi River Valley proposing the establishment of a disaster recovery facility for the waterway that would provide an additional layer of coverage for all MRCTI cities subsidized by the private sector.

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Inset: MRCTI Minnesota Chair, Mayor Sean Dowse of Red Wing, MN thanks his Congressman, Rep. Angie Craig for introducing the RRF Act. Pictured: RRF introduction press conference.

# Congress Introduces Mayors' Resilience Revolving Loan Fund Act

*Innovative Bill creates FEMA low-interest loan program for cities to invest in disaster resilient infrastructure*

Mayors from along the Mississippi River joined members of Congress that are part of the Mississippi River Caucus in the U.S. House to announce an innovative disaster mitigation aim.

U.S. Reps. Angie Craig (MN-02) and Rodney Davis (IL-13) introduced landmark bi-partisan legislation to create a low-interest loan program for states to fund mitigation projects that reduce the risks and costs of disasters. The bill, H.R. 3779, called the Resilience Revolving Loan Fund Act, originally proposed by the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative (MRCTI) in March 2019, is authored by the Ms. Craig and Mr. Davis; and follows months of discussion with local mayors affected by a severe flood season as well as FEMA. Loans could be applied to projects mitigating for multiple hazards.

2019 has seen the longest and largest Midwest flood season in recorded history implicating not just the ten-state corridor of the Main Stem Mississippi River, but the 31-state Mississippi River Basin. In response, local mayors and community leaders expressed the need for proactive investment in critical natural infrastructure such as wetlands, marshes, forests, riparian buffers, reconnected flood plain, reconnected backwater areas as well as levee reconfiguration.

Mayors have been asking for new tools to help them meet the level of disasters on the ground. From damaged infrastructure to emergency response, Mayors have been incurring significant expenses with some estimates placing losses above \$2 billion for the Mississippi River Valley proper.

"2019 has been a record year for us in Davenport in terms of flooding. From the drought of 2012 to the excessive heatwave that gripped our area last week, Iowa has seen several multi-century events stack-up and worsen over the past few years. We need solutions to these impacts that are different than the

same old conventional approach - we need real innovation. The RRF provides a new tool to help us prepare. We're especially supportive of the sponsors prioritizing for natural infrastructure projects in the bill," highlighted Mayor Frank Klipsch of Davenport, IA, Immediate Past Co-Chair of MRCTI.

"A city needs committed partners and stakeholders engaged in order to make a resilience loan project work. This is not a grant - the RRF will require that we present efforts with a strong economic case for restoring our natural infrastructure and we can do that," said Mayor Lionel Johnson of St. Gabriel, LA, Immediate Past Co-Chair of MRCTI.

"When the Mayors of the Mississippi River proposed the passage of a Resilience Revolving Loan Fund (RRF) to Congress this past March, Congresswoman Craig led the way from the very beginning, working with Minnesota Mayors and beyond in over ten states. Disasters are costing our economy as much as 8 percent annually. The American taxpayer gets a return of over \$6.00 for every \$1.00 put into resilience and mitigation," said Mayor Sean Dowse of Red Wing, MN.

"This Resilience Revolving Loan Fund could be a game-changer for us. The longest and largest flood in recorded history has taken a toll on my city. The RRF will enable us as Mayors to bring new and innovative resilience projects on line," said Mayor Rick Emberlin of Grafton, IL and Illinois Chair for MRCTI.

Mayors are pushing for more systemic region-scale approaches to resilience to meet the magnitude of the disasters they are sustaining, can assist in protecting multiple economies, and shift the emphasis from response to preparedness.

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# MRCTI Mayors, Partners Launch First Private-Carried Nutrient Sensor



## Mayors partner with cruise industry and federal agencies to secure freshwater economy

Memphis, TN – Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative (MRCTI) Mayors along with officials from the U.S. Geological Survey, executives from American Queen Steamboat Company, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Maritime Administration launched the first private-carry nutrient sensor for the Mississippi River in September to help secure and protect the Mississippi River's freshwater economy.

In 2018, Mayors signed a historic agreement with the U.S. Geological Survey, the Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Department of Transportation to deploy nutrient sensors on private vessels transecting the River from St. Paul to New Orleans.

"We as mayors along the Mississippi River, see nutrient loading as the greatest threat to our water security. In order to manage this threat, we must measure it. We need to determine if the hundreds of millions of tax dollars going into conservation work along the River or Corps ecosystem restoration work is having an impact and if not where by how much," asserted Frank Klipsch, Mayor of Davenport, IA and Immediate Past Co-Chair of MRCTI.

"It's hard to overestimate how critical fresh water is to the Memphis economy," said Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland. "Each year the river draws hundreds of thousands of visitors to our city contributing millions to our local economy. Because of this, we created the Fresh Water Institute to ensure that our drinking water is safe for years to come."

West Memphis Mayor, Marco McClendon calibrated what the launch means implicating both sides of the River: "The tourism industry within the Mississippi River region of Arkansas provides over 22,000 jobs and is a \$2.4 billion industry. So, we

need to know what is in our water where to keep it clean and that's what the sensors we're deploying will do."

As the next step in its longstanding commitment to the river and communities in which it serves, AQSC will be the first private carrier of the USGS sensors which will allow for data collection as the company's flagship vessel, the American Queen, travels up and down the River on its various itineraries. An informational kiosk has also been installed on the riverboat so that guests can learn more about the project.

"As the long-standing leader in Mississippi River cruising, we are dedicated to the sustainable health of not just the river, but the communities that rely on it," said John Waggoner, founder and CEO of American Queen Steamboat Company. "Along with our partners, we are thrilled to introduce the USGS Mobile Super Gage on our flagship vessel and look forward to keeping the waters in which we travel clean for many future generations to come."

The U.S. Geological Survey will own, operate, and maintain the nutrient sensors being deployed on private vessels in this partnership. "The USGS is dedicated to providing sound science that informs policy-making at all levels of government. Today's launch exemplifies our commitment to working with partners from both the public and private sectors to accomplish projects that impact American communities," emphasized Dr. Jim Reilly, Director of the USGS.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been a committed partner with the Mayors, AQSC, and federal agencies since planning for this partnership began. "The Corps' missions along the Mississippi River include environmental stewardship, and ecosystem restoration. The healthier the Mississippi River system is ecologically, the more resilient and the better protected communities and economies are," stated COL Zachary Miller, Commander of the Memphis District.



# Memphis Hosts Largest Annual

## Mayors Gather After Historic 2019 Floods to Outline a 2020 Vision

ANNE & PAT  
HALLORAN  
LOUNGE

Mississippi River  
Cities & Towns Initiative

Mississippi River  
Cities & Towns Initiative

Mississippi River  
Cities & Towns Initiative



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### *New Effort with Rotary*

systems, hunger relief, and even local reading programs,” detailed Mayor Jim Strickland, of Memphis, TN.

“Considering the historic flood, we just sustained as the longest and largest in recorded history, our cities are going to need broad and innovative partnerships to help us meet our increasing infrastructure needs. Therefore, we jumped at the chance to build a working relationship with Rotary,” said Lionel Johnson, Mayor of St. Gabriel, LA and Immediate Past Co-Chair.

“Fifty cities and over 20 million people drink the water from the Mississippi River every day and/or use it to power their manufacturing, tourism, and agriculture. It made complete sense to us to begin working with the cities along the Mississippi River through our community development mandate,” explained Barry Rassin, Immediate Past President of Rotary International.

This relationship would not be possible without the direct involvement of one of the River’s most dedicated and storied champions and that is Ambassador Andrew Young. Andrew Young was born in Louisiana and grew-up near the Mississippi River. Ambassador Young has been working with MRCTI since

2016 to help America’s waterway; He is the reason for this new collaboration with Rotary.

“Here are two organizations with the same mission, working in the very communities these Mayors represent. Why not have them join forces around one of this nation’s most urgent needs – restoration of our natural and built infrastructure. MRCTI is a new partner of mt Foundation and I’ve worked with Rotary International for decades – this collaboration will work,” emphasized Ambassador Andrew Young, President of the Andrew Young Foundation.

Mississippi River Mayors and Rotary International unveiled a broad strategy to link Rotary Clubs to their city halls on local infrastructure projects.

“In La Crosse, WI we’ve been very fortunate to work closely with our local Rotary on improving water quality and we believe the work we’re doing together can be an example for other Mayors on how these relationships can bring benefits to main street,” stated Mayor Tim Kabat of La Crosse, WI.

Rotary’s global reach is also a great compliment to communities along the Mississippi River especially given the waterway’s preeminent place in the global commodity supply chain.



# Mississippi River Annual Meeting to Date Initiative for the Corridor

Pictured at podium: Memphis Mayors Jim Strickland opens the MRCTI Annual Meeting press conference joined by most of the Mayors that attended from all ten states of the corridor. Inset picture: Memphis police honor guard and bagpipe players preside lead the opening ceremonies portion of the Annual Meeting welcome reception at Beale Street Landing next to the Mississippi River's edge.



"I would emphasize how good a fit this is for MRCTI and Rotary International to work together using the international footprint of Rotary and the global impact the Mississippi River has as examples. The world's major food-producing river basins such as the Ganges, Nile, Yangtze, Rhine, and Parana River Basins are part of a robust community and we Mayors have brought the Mississippi into that community because our basin is the #1 food-producer on Earth," said Mayor Frank Klipsch of Davenport, IA and Immediate Past MRCTI Co-Chair. "Because Rotary is already working in many of the countries occupied by these other basins, we can work together to secure the world's access to freshwater and food thereby keeping commodity markets stable which sustains so much economy in Mississippi River cities."

## Memphis sets new Records for MRCTI Annual Meeting

The MRCTI Annual Meeting hosted by the City of Member broke several records set by the Quad Cities in 2018 including: 1) most attendees; 2) most funds raised; 3) most and largest partnerships solidified; 4) most number of elected officials present; and 5) the largest private sector contingent to date. "When the largest city on the River hosts the Mississippi's largest organization of



Mayors, expect big things," stated Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland at the opening press conference pictured above.

### Annual Meeting positions Memphis for more

Hosting MRCTI meetings has its benefits. For Memphis in particular, the Annual Meeting opened opportunities for Memphis to profile infrastructure projects to Wallstreet investors in New York in late 2019 and put Memphis in an advantageous position to compete for the MRCTI/Quantified Ventures Environmental Impact Bond Challenge. The Annual Meeting also brought together Memphis city government and The Memphis Rotary Club through the new collaboration announced by MRCTI. If your city is interested in hosting an event, please contact the MRCTI staff for information.



# New Orleans & Memphis Win MRCTI & Quantified Ventures Environmental Impact Bond Challenge (EIB)

MRCTI and QV opened a competition in 2019 for the two best projects to deploy EIB financing for natural infrastructure. The City of Memphis plans to utilize their EIB to finance a suite of green infrastructure projects, including large-scale bioswales and wetlands, as well as stream restoration to address flooding and water quality issues. The EIB is expected to be in the range of \$15-30M. The City of New Orleans will issue a \$30M EIB to capitalize a Green Infrastructure Fund to make loans and provide credit to homeowners, businesses and government agencies for green infrastructure, stormwater systems, renewable energy, to advance the City's Climate Resilience Plan.



QV Managing Director, Todd Appel, calls for cities to apply for the EIB Challenge to fund infrastructure



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## Advisory Board

Charles Robertson, Vice President of American Cruise Lines (pictured above right standing at the podium) presents on his company's new level of sustainability commitments for all their Mississippi River vessels.

### FedEx and American Queen Steamboat become new Chair and Vice Chair of the MRCTI Corporate Advisory Board

Duple Travillion, Senior Government Affairs Representative for FedEx (pictured above center) took the reins of board leadership from Tetra Tech at the MRCTI Annual Meeting in Memphis. FedEx as a corporate partner promised to work closely with the Mayors and MRCTI partners to reduce waste streams, promote sustainability in the global supply chain, and include the waterways in future freight capabilities.

Elkay, manufacturer of water fountains and bottle refill stations, also joined the Advisory Board but with the additional mission of assisting MRCTI with

the plastic waste reduction campaign. Elkay manufactures its refill stations in Savanna, IL right next to the Mississippi River. Savanna Mayor Tim Lain (pictured here) introduced Elkay to MRCTI at the Annual Meeting.

John Watson, Sustainability Manager at Elkay (picture below) detailed for Mayors how they can better manage their drinking water and its access



highlighting a new agreement with London to make water more available in outdoor public spaces so plastic waste bottles could be more readily reduced throughout the city.



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## Revolving Loan Fund

"My home flooded as a result of the 1,000-year rain event of 2016. It took me

nearly a year and a half to return. Clearly, I am personally committed to finding solutions to the increasingly frequent and intense disasters we are sustaining. The Resilience Revolving Loan can be a transformative option for us Mayors to realize preparedness at a level that would be otherwise unobtainable or far out into the future. The good news is that an RRF can assist all the economies that operate in my city including the port of Southern Louisiana, the nation's largest inland port by tonnage," said Mayor Sharon Weston Broome of Baton Rouge, LA and MRCTI Co-Chair.

"If our City had all the money we've spent since 2008 on temporary mitigation for these disasters, we would have a fortune to put toward a resilience loan for a permanent solution. 2019 has impacted Missouri from the Missouri River on one side to the Mississippi River on the other with plenty of impacts in between. I fail to understand why there wouldn't be full support of an RRF," said Mayor Jo Anne Smiley of Clarksville, MO.

"It's not like (the water is) going to go away. It's just going to go downstream and so we've got to figure out how we're going to keep all the cities protected along the way and certainly saving lives and businesses and economic development is a piece of that," emphasized Mayor Diana Broderon of Muscatine, IA

"The Delta has been flood-fighting non-stop now for nearly nine months. If we are going to preserve and enhance our economy, we will need to achieve real resilience. Alleviating vulnerability means no longer approaching solutions just inside our backyard, but at regional and corridor scale. That's exactly what we're doing here by moving the Resilience Revolving Loan Fund forward," stated Mayor Errick Simmons, Greenville, MS.

Motivated locally, but thinking regionally, MRCTI Mayors are realizing support from their constituents to pursue new approaches that shift risk, mitigate injury, and enhance benefits.



# U.S. EDA Makes \$347 million for Avail- able for Disasters



In the wake of the 2019 floods, the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration received \$347 million in disaster recovery funds for EDA regions that cover Mississippi River states (see funding chart this page).

Below is a link to the USED 2019 funding along with regional office locations and application information.

General Page on Funding Availability

<https://www.eda.gov/disaster-recovery/supplemental/2019/>

Regional Offices – MRCTI Member cities fall in the Chicago, Denver, Austin or Atlanta offices of EDA

[https://www.eda.gov/disaster-recovery/contact/?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=](https://www.eda.gov/disaster-recovery/contact/?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=)

FAQ - Application Process is on page 10 (through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov))

[https://www.eda.gov/files/programs/disaster-recovery/supplemental/2019/EDA\\_FY19%20Disaster%20NOFO\\_FAQ.pdf](https://www.eda.gov/files/programs/disaster-recovery/supplemental/2019/EDA_FY19%20Disaster%20NOFO_FAQ.pdf)

Regional allocations that include Mississippi River States.

EDA Regional Office	Disaster Supplemental Allocation
Atlanta / ATRO	\$140,000,000
Austin / AURO	\$50,000,000
Chicago / CRO	\$50,000,000
Denver / DRO	\$107,000,000

## Mayor Kabat of La Crosse, WI testifies before Senate Com- mittee the Climate Crisis for MRCTI

Mayor Kabat (pictured below center) testified before the Senate Committee on the Climate Crisis in December on the impact of the 2019 flood to the Mississippi River Corridor. Mayor Kabat implored the Committee to shift the nation's disaster spending toward resilience and mitigation as cities expect climate impacts to worsen. Soon, a



new Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant program will be published by FEMA altering how resilience funds are allocated to states and localities in the near-term.

## MRCTI Co-Chair, Mayor Bob Gallagher urges cooperation in the face of climate impacts



Mayor Gallagher (pictured far right) delivers address on the Paris Accord panel hosted by Facebook and The Guardian at New York Climate Week.

MRCTI Co-Chair, Mayor Bob Gallagher of Bettendorf, IA represented MRCTI at New York Climate Week September 23-27. While there, Mayor Gallagher presented at the *Sustainable Investment Forum*, the *We Are Still In* empowerment summit hosted by Facebook and The Guardian, and CDP North America's session on climate-transforming cities.

"One of the greatest challenges to addressing climate risk is the divisive rhetoric that tends to infiltrate the discourse when the focus needs to remain squarely on solutions to the billion-dollar disasters we are sustaining constantly," said Mayor Gallagher during several of his public appearances.

Mayor Gallagher also conducted high-level talks with Wall Street experts on developing the most sweeping incentives for private sector dollars world-wide to flow into Mississippi River Corridor infrastructure. The outcome of those talks will be included in the MRCTI 2020 Federal Policy Platform which will be unveiled at the Capitol Meeting, March 3-5.



## MRCTI Unveils Disaster Predic- tion & Assessment Portal

The USGS, NOAA, NASA, the European Space Agency, and MRCTI unveiled the MRCTI Disaster Assessment and Prediction Portal in St. Louis in August with St. Louis Mayor Lyda Krewson presiding (picture above at podium). Mayors now can go to one on-line tool for all their disaster impact needs. The portal is available through the MRCTI website.



# MRCTI Elects New Co-Chairs

*Mayors along the Nation's most important waterway elected new Co-Chairs and a new Executive Committee to lead MRCTI*



Sharon Weston Broome  
Mayor  
Baton Rouge, LA  
MRCTI Co-Chair



Robert Gallagher  
Mayor  
Bettendorf, IA  
MRCTI Co-Chair

Mayors of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative elected two new co-chairs and an executive committee (shown below) to serve from September 19, 2019 to September 16, 2021. Mayor Sharon Weston Broome of Baton Rouge, LA and Mayor Robert Gallagher of Bettendorf, IA will lead MRCTI for the next two years in the wake of the largest and longest flood in recorded history.

Both Mayors have been a member of MRCTI for most if not all of their term(s) in office and both Mayors elevated to the position of Co-Chair from within the Executive Committee chairing their respective states. Outgoing Co-Chair, Lionel Johnson of St. Gabriel, LA summed-up the transition this way: "I am a better mayor because of MRCTI and I wish all the same success and growth that I enjoyed for our new co-chairs moving forward."

## *Mayors of the new MRCTI Executive Committee*



Sean Dowse  
Mayor  
Red Wing, MN



Tim Kabat  
Mayor  
La Crosse, WI



Mike Bawden  
Mayor  
Riverdale, IA



Rick Eberlin  
Mayor  
Grafton, IL



Phil Stang  
Mayor  
Kimmswick, MO



Jim Strickland  
Mayor  
Memphis, TN



Kevin Smith  
Mayor  
Helena-West Helena, AR



George Flaggs  
Mayor  
Vicksburg, MS

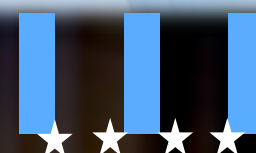


Belinda Constant  
Mayor  
Gretna, LA

## *McKnight Closes Mississippi River Program*

In a stunning development, the McKnight Foundation board voted to sunset their 30-year Mississippi River Program and focus much of the foundation's resources on climate work and economic mobility. This shift concludes a unique legacy of McKnight's work centered around the Mississippi River Valley as both a home and a bellwether of progress toward achieving cleaner water, a restored ecology, and improved quality of life. McKnight will supply MRCTI with a generous gift at the end of 2020 in gratitude for the Mayors' service to recover the region.

*Join Mayors in Washington, DC for the MRCTI Capitol Meeting March 3-5; co-hosted in part by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Details at [www.mrcti.org](http://www.mrcti.org)*



**MRCTI**  
CAPITOL MEETING  
MARCH 3-5, 2020

