



Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative

VIRTUAL CAPITOL MEETING MARCH 8-10, 2022, WASHINGTON



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Mississippi River Mayors Step-Up Resilience Projects as
Spring Flood Season Approaches, Announce Jobs Act Partnership**

March 10, 2022, St. Louis, Missouri – Mayors of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative gathered this week for their virtual Capitol Meeting in Washington, DC to meet with national leaders on resilience and infrastructure spending.

Leaders in Washington for the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative 10th virtual Capitol Meeting addressed three key points during the meetings announced at today's press conference:

- On the eve of flood season 2022, Mayors are working to make critical progress on the partnership launched with Ducks Unlimited - dirt is moving and new flood storage is being made;
- Mayors are launching a new and unique MRCTI Infrastructure Facility to help cities add a new level of capacity to compete for Jobs Act grants over the next several cycles;
- Mayors announce the opening of the second Outcomes-based Financing Challenge with Quantified Ventures.

The Two-Rivers Project with Ducks Unlimited will work to create natural flood storage at within the confluence area of the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers reducing vulnerability for both Illinois and Missouri cities that sustained significant damage during the 2016 and 2019 floods.

"The historic floods of 2019 wiped-out more than 80 percent (80%) of my city's economy and then COVID-19 took the rest," reflected **Mayor Mike Morrow of Grafton, IL**. "The Two-Rivers Project with Ducks Unlimited will work to divert acres of inundation away from my city and into wetland areas."

"We now have the design work completed, the necessary permitting, and we're moving dirt to make sure the Mississippi and the Illinois rivers flood a natural area before the downtown centers of Grafton, IL; West Alton, MO; Alton, IL and others. What's more is that this project is just one of many we unveiled in September 2021 with MRCTI to increase resilience at corridor scale," explained **Michael Sertle, Chief Project Biologist with Ducks Unlimited**.

The \$1.5 trillion spending bill known as the Jobs Act, or Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Package is partly comprised of competitive funds at the state and federal level. In order to better position the Mississippi river corridor, MRCTI has entered into an agreement with a number of partners in

Washington, DC and along the Corridor to provide cities a new level of capacity called the *MRCTI Infrastructure Facility* to help compete for the estimated \$75 billion in federal funding that will be coming into the corridor over the next five years.

Mayor Simmons, Mayor of Greenville, MS, and Co-Chair of MRCTI said, “This *Infrastructure Facility* is going to lift our cities to a point where they could move out more and better Jobs Act proposals with more sound strategy, science, priority, resilience, and environmental justice.”

Four partners comprise the MRCTI Infrastructure Facility with more to come. Each organization brings a valuable Jobs Act asset including: Arnold & Porter for general strategy and priority-setting; CSRS for disaster resilience and climate mitigation; Quantified Ventures for financial structuring and share assemblage; and Two Degrees Adapt for data analysis, science, and knowledge-based approaches.

Finally, Mayors announced in close partnership with Quantified Ventures a second Outcomes-based Financing Challenge through which additional Mississippi River cities will be awarded a grant to structure an outcomes-based finance model for a resilience/environmental improvement project pertaining to any type of infrastructure.

“When we launched the first challenge in 2019, we weren’t sure what kind of projects we would end-up with where. But, the first round ended-up making history with the development of the Mississippi River Corridor’s first ever green mortgage program in New Orleans,” explained **Eric Letsinger, founder and CEO of Quantified Ventures**.

“Sustaining the beauty and restoration of the Wolf River wetlands is vital, and Memphis is poised to implement our resiliency project,” said **Mayor Jim Strickland of Memphis and MRCTI Co-Chair**.

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Press Conference Participants and Contacts:

Presiding:

Jim Strickland, Mayor of Memphis, TN, MRCTI Co-Chair

Erick Simmons, Mayor of Greenville, MS, MRCTI Co-Chair

Spring Flood Season:

Hon. Mike Morrow, Mayor of Grafton, IL

Michael Sertle, Chief Biologist, Ducks Unlimited

Announcement:

James Kim, Partner – Arnold & Porter

Brian Smoliak, Partner – Two Degrees Adapt

Tim Barfield, President CSRS

Eric Letsinger, CEO & Founder – Quantified Ventures

The Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative is a coalition of 101 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.

Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people. Thanks to decades of abiding by that single mission, Ducks Unlimited is now the world's largest and most effective private waterfowl and wetlands conservation organization. DU is able to multilaterally deliver its work through a series of partnerships with private individuals, landowners, agencies, scientific communities and other entities.

Quantified Ventures: Quantified Ventures is an outcomes-based capital firm that drives transformative health, social, and environmental impact. We advance health equity, social impact, community resilience, and environmental justice for a growing array of public and private organizations. We work with innovators, risk takers, pragmatists, and optimists to finance high-impact initiatives at scale.

The videos will be placed on the MRCTI YouTube channel https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChNL2z_Vhgdet2rcQor1-rg