

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



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Mayors Along the Mississippi River Push for National Drought Resilience

November 1, 2022, St. Louis, Missouri – Mayors of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative (MRCTI) gathered this week with federal officials and industry leaders to take-stock of drought impacts unfolding in the Mississippi River Corridor and announce policy proposals that can better equip the nation with drought resilience and response.

After enduring one of the hottest summers on record and months of dry conditions, Midwestern states are in the throws of a thirty-year drought where all ten Mississippi River States are currently sustaining extreme to severe drought conditions.

“Droughts are hazard multipliers,” said **Errick Simmons, Mayor of Greenville, MS and Co-Chair of MRCTI**. “We actually dread droughts more than floods because the impacts of drought are usually longer lasting, effect more of the economy, and set us up for more damaging results from future storms. We will be profiling this drought at COP 27 in Egypt this month and making several announcements on improving resilience to drought for our corridor.

Multiple economies are now feeling the effects of low water along the Mississippi River including the global commodity supply chain, manufacturing, tourism, and agriculture.

“My area of the Mississippi has the driest conditions in the corridor with extreme drought covering the three-corners region of Missouri, Illinois, and Kentucky,” explained **Stacy Kinder, Mayor of Cape Girardeau, MO**. “Agriculture is a significant portion of our economy. The Mississippi River moves over \$164 billion in agriculture exports annually. This drought is affecting forty percent (40%) of that revenue at one of the most important times of the year.”

“If your community is like mine where outdoor recreation and tourism comprise over 80 percent of your economy, the cruise ship industry is crucial. Right now, we can’t bring host cruise vessels due to low water. Floods I can manage; but in drought, everyone loses,” said **Phil Stang, Mayor of Kimmswick, MO and MRCTI Missouri State Chair**.

Mayors announced policy proposals to equip the U.S. with national drought policy. Though there has been considerable progress made in developing the science and monitoring of drought, there has been little movement in achieving drought resilience.

“In my thirty-year career in downtown Memphis, I’ve never seen the River this low before. We’re now more than 14 feet below low water stage on the Mississippi here in Memphis. Low water can have a greater cost than high water. Yet, we have all these tools at our disposal for floods, and few for droughts,” emphasized **Jim Strickland, Mayor of Memphis, TN and MRCTI Co-Chair**.

Mayors outlined several national drought policy proposals they hope the federal National Drought Resilience Partnership (NDRP) would consider immediately.

1. Award federal disaster declarations to states for drought;
2. Allow cities to spend FEMA funds addressing drought impacts;
3. Make drought mitigation a spending priority for Jobs Act grants;
4. Develop national incentives for manufacturers to build-out water recycling;
5. Allow for more adaptive multi-watershed management so river systems can be managed at basin scale to mitigate for climate impact;
6. Allow farmers and land owners to be compensated for voluntarily rotating acreage out of irrigation to alleviate drought;
7. Make agricultural credits for climate mitigation available under TITLE II, Subtitle C of the Inflation Reduction Act available for drought resilience activities.

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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.