



News from

# Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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## Kind River Bill Ensures Funding Stream Won't Dry Up

*Off-budget trust fund saves taxpayers; Preservation protects jobs that depend on River's health*

**La Crosse, WI** –U.S. Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI), founder and co-chair of the Upper Mississippi Task Force, today unveiled legislation to ensure the continued protection and preservation of the Mississippi River by establishing a reliable and self-sustaining funding stream for river restoration projects.

“Running through the heart of America, the Mississippi River is an integral part of the history, economy, and culture of this country,” said Kind. “In light of the recent 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Grand Excursion celebrating the important role of the river in the development of middle-America, we should be doing everything we can to see to it that this national treasure is preserved for another 150 years and beyond.”

Kind's bill takes a fiscally responsible approach by creating an off-budget trust fund that would ultimately replace the yearly appropriations made to the Upper Mississippi River System Environmental Management Program (EMP), a program designed to evaluate, restore and enhance river and wetland habitats along a 1200-mile stretch of the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. The “Upper Mississippi River Trust Fund” would continue to receive funding until it reaches \$2.5 billion, at which point, the trust would become self-sustaining on interest generated from the fund.

Kind's bill also addresses the need to ensure continued investment in habitat restoration to preserve the long-term health of the River. Studies show that 20 to 30 percent of the backwaters that border the river will be lost by 2050 if restoration efforts are not accelerated. Millions of people annually visit or recreate on the Upper Mississippi River, annually spending more than \$6 billion and supporting more than 140,000 jobs.

“Unless we act soon, the Mississippi River will lose the ability to support hundreds of species and hundreds of thousands of jobs,” said Scott Faber, a Water Resources Specialist for Environmental Defense. “The Mississippi is a national treasure that must be restored.”

The restoration bill would also clarify the Army Corps of Engineer's channel maintenance responsibilities, including the need to dredge the river before “drawdowns;” increase funds to relocate frequently flooded homes before and after floods; create a wetlands restoration demonstration project; create a restoration project for the Lower Mississippi River; and develop monitoring programs in each sub-basin of the Mississippi River basin to help target and reduce nitrogen reaching the Gulf.