



News from

Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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Rep. Kind Votes to Advance Major Upper Mississippi Restoration Project

House Approves \$3.6 Billion for New Locks, Dams, and Environmental Restoration

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Ron Kind yesterday evening voted to approve H.R. 1495, reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), which directs the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to undertake projects and programs for flood control, hurricane recovery, inland navigation, shoreline protection, and environmental restoration, and to conduct water resource studies.

“It is appropriate that on the eve of Earth Day we have made the largest investment in the Upper Mississippi River in the history of our nation,” Rep. Kind said. “This legislation is a tribute to the vital dual role the river plays as a significant ecological and navigational system, and will protect both of those aspects by ensuring the environmental projects stay on par with the navigational projects. This tremendous investment will create a foundation for wildlife habitat and recreational areas that future generations will enjoy.”

One of the largest projects in the bill is \$3.6 billion for a system of new locks and dams and environmental restoration for the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Water System. Approximately half the funding will be used for new locks and some smaller-scale navigational improvements. The other half of the funding will go to ecosystem restoration projects, including island building, construction of fish passages, floodplain restoration, water level management, and habitat protection.

“This bill will also address long-standing needs well beyond the Upper Mississippi,” Rep. Kind added. “This country’s water resources infrastructure was largely constructed 70 or more years ago, and much of it has fallen into disrepair. Hurricane Katrina so clearly demonstrated to the world the consequences of neglect. Reauthorization of WRDA is a necessary first step in meeting the needs of our citizens, industry, and environment.”

Although the Water Resources Development Act is intended to be authorized every two years, the President last signed a WRDA bill in 2000. In the last Congress (109th), both the House and Senate passed WRDA bills through their respective bodies. Although progress was made, the House and Senate could not resolve differences between the two bills before the Congress adjourned.

The bill also provides accountability in these projects, requiring the Corps to submit "implementation reports" to Congress regarding the status of ongoing environmental projects, and requires an external peer review of projects that would cost more than \$50 million.