



News from

Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1406 Longworth House Office Building • Washington, D.C. 20515 • (202) 225-5506

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, April 23, 2007

Contact: Anne Lupardus

Phone: 202-225-5506

Rep. Kind Highlights Mississippi River Initiatives

House Recently Advanced Largest Ever Investment in the Upper Mississippi River

La Crosse, Wis. – A day after Earth Day, U.S. Rep. Ron Kind stressed the importance of taking a comprehensive approach in maintaining a healthy river system and shared updates on key Congressional initiatives aimed at preserving, protecting, and enhancing the upper Mississippi River Basin.

“There are a multitude of initiatives we are moving forward to protect the integrity of this river,” Rep. Kind said. “And it was appropriate that on the eve of Earth Day, last week we approved the largest investment in the Upper Mississippi River in the history of our nation. This river plays a vital dual role as a significant ecological and navigational system, and the investments we are making today create the foundation for not only sustained wildlife habitat and recreational areas, but also a key source of transportation as well.”

Last week, Rep. Kind voted with a majority in the House to approve H.R. 1495, reauthorization of the **Water Resources Development Act (WRDA)**, which advances a \$3.6 billion project 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.

Other initiatives in Rep. Kind’s Mississippi River Protection plan include:

Environmental Management Program – Since 1986, the EMP has emerged as the nation’s premier large-river restoration program and as a model for interagency and interstate cooperation on natural resource management. Rep. Kind has headed up a bi-partisan effort urging full EMP funding, and was successful in getting \$20 million for the 2007 fiscal year.

Healthy Farms, Foods, and Fuels Act of 2007 – This bipartisan bill (HR 1551) will guide and expand farm programs so that farmers and their communities are better able to offer clean air and water and safe habitat for wildlife and recreation, offer innovative solutions to our nation’s energy problems and reduce our dependence on foreign oil, and provide greater access to healthy foods to help steer our children away from the health problems associated with obesity. It will do all this while at the same time making farming more profitable for more farmers, invigorating rural economies, and bringing American farm policy in line with international trade laws.

- more -

REPAIR Act, HR 767 – The Refuge Ecology Protection, Assistance, and Immediate Response Act (HR 767) combats invasive species in our refuge system. Invasive species are the number one ecological and financial threat to our refuge system and the backlog for combating invasive species is the fastest growing portion of the Refuge System budget.

The REPAIR Act provides grants to agencies or individuals to fund projects to remove harmful nonnative species and promote native species and their habitat on lands and waters in and adjacent to National Wildlife Refuges. It also provides short-term financial support for an immediate response to harmful nonnative species that are an urgent threat to a refuge and makes grants available to states to identify invasive species, assess and prioritize needs, increase capacity at the state level, and perform long-term monitoring of projects.

Upper Mississippi River Basin Protection Act – This bill will be introduced in the 110th Congress very soon, and develops a coordinated public-private approach to understanding and reducing nutrient and sediment loss in the Upper Mississippi River Basin. Relying on existing federal, state and local programs, the bill establishes a water quality monitoring network and an integrated computer-modeling program. These monitoring and modeling efforts will provide the baseline data needed to make scientifically sound and cost-effective conservation decisions. This bill addresses the what, when and where (quantity, timing, and location) of sediment and nutrients from their source on the landscape to their fate in our rivers and lakes. It also contains provisions to protect the privacy of personal data collected in connection with monitoring and assessment activities.

As founder and Co-Chair of the Mississippi River Caucus, Rep. Kind has devoted his efforts to finding effective and balanced solutions to foster sustainable development on the Upper Mississippi. Kind also serves as Co-Chair of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, a bipartisan alliance of members of Congress who support fishing, hunting and conservation as well as Co-Chair of the National Wildlife Refuge Caucus, which advocates for adequate refuge budgets, and supports the strategic growth of the Refuge.