



News from

Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, May 17, 2007

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Kind Continues Efforts to Protect Mississippi River

Reintroduces Upper Mississippi River Basin Protection Act to Reduce Sedimentation, Improve Water Quality

Washington, DC – Today, U.S. Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) reintroduced his Upper Mississippi River Basin Protection Act, legislation calling for the development of a coordinated, public-private approach to studying nutrient and sediment runoff in the Upper Mississippi River Basin, and establishing a system for water-quality monitoring and a computer modeling program to analyze data.

“The river plays a vital role in our economy and our quality of life in western Wisconsin, and increased sediment and nutrient flow into the upper basin poses a very serious threat to the long-term health of the entire Mississippi River system,” said Kind, founder and Co-chair of the Upper Mississippi River Task Force. “This bill will lay the scientific foundation necessary to ensure the future quality and beauty of the Mississippi for generations to come.”

The accumulation of excess sediment (from increased soil erosion) and nutrients (such as fertilizers and animal waste) in the Upper Mississippi River Basin reduces wetland habitat and imperils a wide variety of fish and waterfowl. The increased soil erosion causes applied fertilizer from area farms to wash into the river, resulting not only in dangerously high nitrogen levels, but also \$300 million annually in unnecessary costs to farmers. In addition, sediment accumulation fills the main shipping channel of the river, costing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers more than \$100 million annually in dredging costs.

Kind's Upper Mississippi River Basin Protection Act aims to produce the data needed to better understand sediment and nutrient flow from its source in the landscape to its destination in our rivers and lakes. The legislation establishes a sedimentation and nutrient reduction monitoring network and an integrated computer modeling program that, combined, will provide the baseline data needed to make scientifically sound and cost-effective decisions to improve the Upper Mississippi River's ecosystem.

Kind has introduced and the House has passed the bill in the last three Congresses, but opponents in the Senate have held up the legislation. With new leadership in both chambers, Rep. Kind is hopeful to work with his colleagues in the House and the Senate to advance this important bill.

“While there is no easy solution to stopping the runoff of sediment and nutrients into the Upper Mississippi River Basin, this legislation will make significant strides toward reducing this flow of harmful pollutants into ‘America’s River,’” Rep. Kind said. “I have worked closely with farmers, industry, sporting groups, conservation organizations, and government agencies to develop this effective, basin-wide, and non-regulatory approach, and am confident it will find support in both the House and the Senate.”

(more)

The Upper Mississippi River system, with tributaries and a basin encompassing much of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri, is widely recognized as one of our nation's great multi-use natural resources. While the Mississippi River and its tributaries provide drinking water to approximately 22 million Americans, the system's 1,300 navigable miles transport millions of tons of commercial cargo via barges. In addition, forty percent of North America's waterfowl use the wetlands and backwaters of the main stem as a migratory flyway, illustrating the environmental significance of the system as well as recreation capabilities. Overall, the Upper Mississippi River Basin provides \$1.2 billion annually in recreation income and \$6.6 billion to the area's tourism industries.