



News from

Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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Rep. Kind Announces \$618,000 for Driftless Area Renewable Energy Initiative

Also Ensures Full Funding for Upper Mississippi Environmental Management Program

Washington, DC – U.S. Rep. Ron Kind today announced the inclusion of \$618,000 for a Driftless Area Renewable Energy Initiative in the FY08 Energy and Water Appropriations Bill, which passed Tuesday.

“We must continue to invest in ways to make America more energy independent by harnessing the potential of renewable resources right here in our backyard,” Rep. Kind said. “We’ve made great strides on renewable fuels, but we are still a long way from finding a sustainable path to energy independence. By encouraging the production and use of perennial biomass for energy, this initiative will help diversify our renewable energy repertoire, and will provide new opportunities for investment our rural communities.”

The funding will be used by six non-profit Resource Conservation and Development Councils over three years to create pilot projects that would promote the production and use of perennial biomass, like grasses and legumes, for energy. This initiative will develop the producer base, markets, and infrastructure needed to turn biomass into renewable energy through cooperative regional efforts in the four-state Driftless Area – Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

“This is good news for the protection of the environment and Mississippi River,” said Ed Weber, President River Country Resource Conservation and Development. “This funding will assist the Driftless Area Initiative in being proactive instead of reactive with the constant changes in the driftless area to produce more annual crops such as corn and soybeans. The planting of more perennial crops such as grasses for energy production will hold the soil in place and provide an economic return to landowners. This is an economic and viable solution to improved resource management in the Upper Mississippi River Basin.”

For more information on the Driftless Area Initiative, contact Ed Weber at (715) 866-4370.

In addition, as co-chair of the Upper Mississippi Task Force, Rep. Kind today hailed the \$23.4 million included in the spending bill for the Upper Mississippi River System Environmental Management Program (EMP).

“The EMP is the nation’s premier large-river restoration program, and serves as a model for interagency and interstate cooperation on natural resource management,” Rep. Kind said. “EMP helps protect the wildlife and economy of the Upper Mississippi River System, and I am pleased I was able to effectively convince the appropriators that the federal government should continue its commitment to this highly successful program by fully funding the administration’s request at \$23.4 million.”

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First authorized by the 1986 Water Resource Development Act, EMP works to evaluate, restore and enhance river and wetland habitats, as well as offset damages to the environment caused by the construction of navigation and flood control projects in the Upper Mississippi River System. Without adequate funding, river habitat would continue to be lost, jeopardizing the tourism industry, which amounts to billions of dollars a year in spending and thousands of jobs, as well as the drinking water for millions of Americans.

The Upper Mississippi River System encompasses some 1,300 miles of the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers in the States of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin.

Rep. Kind has been the leading supporter of the EMP since he was elected to Congress in 1996. As founder and co-chair of the Upper Mississippi River Basin Congressional Task Force, Kind has been active in promoting the vast benefits of the EMP in Congress and has consistently advocated for full funding.