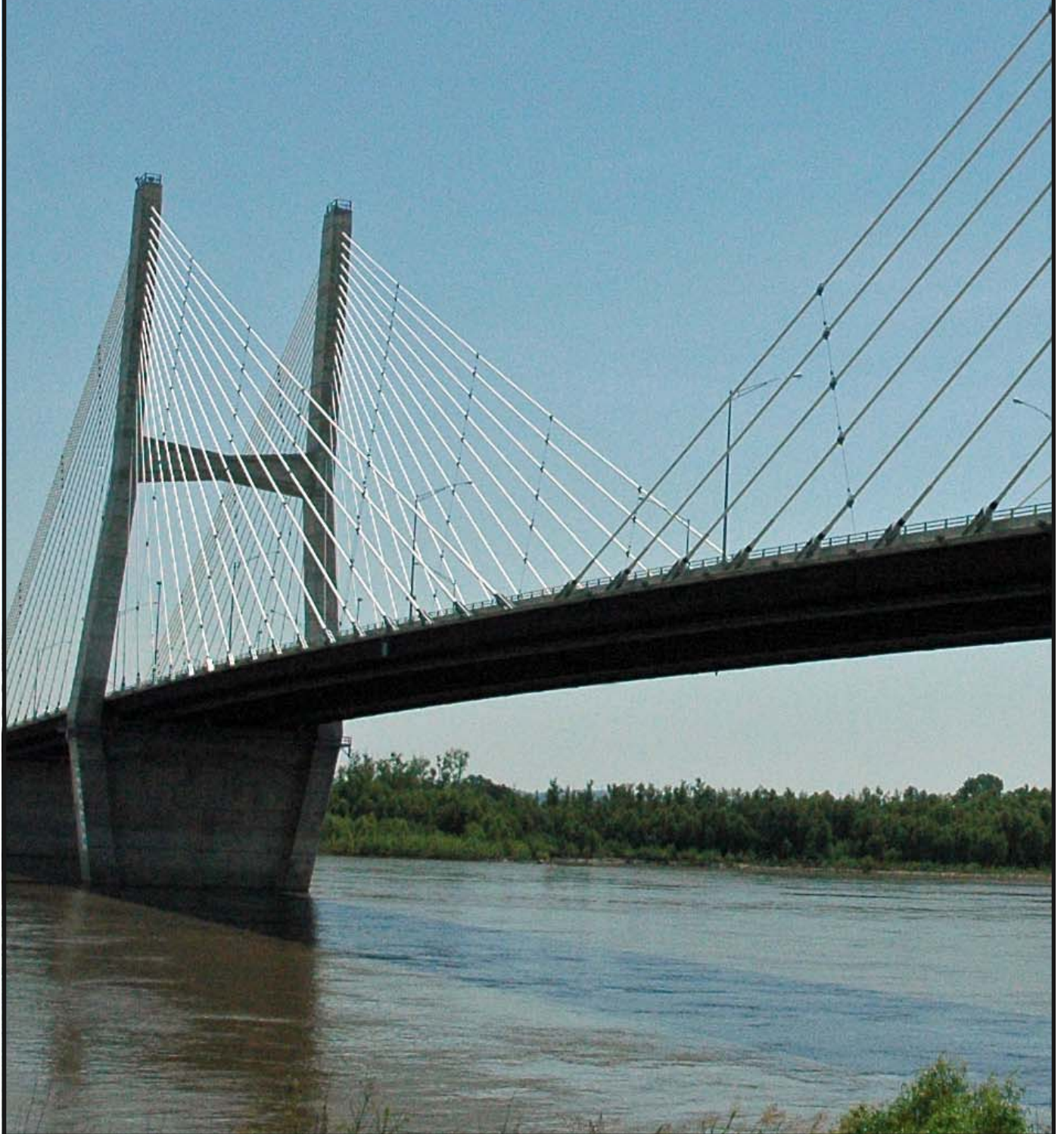


Middle Mississippi River Partnership
2007
A Year In Review



Chairman's Report

Robert Cail
Refuge Manager, Middle Mississippi
River National Wildlife Refuge; US
Fish & Wildlife Service

As I begin to look back at the many accomplishments during the 2007 calendar year.... I'm overwhelmed with a sense of pride for all the continued hard work and dedication from all of our partners. This year marks a maturing of the Middle Mississippi River Partnership Coordination Plan; a giant leap forward in terms of individual River Reach Assessments, Corridor Collaborative Planning, and Hydro-Geomorphological Modeling (HGM).



I mention a giant leap forward, because this process, sponsored by the US Army Corps of Engineers, strengthens our outreach to new partners, some of which have gained a new sense of our mission and are revealing a new level of commonality for the many natural resources we aim to protect. Strategic planning was fostered by soliciting input from farming, recreational, and resource professionals, transportation representatives, navigation industry and external affairs within each River Reach for the more than 195 river miles stretch. This "issue-based" mantra will prove to impact budgetary priorities based on legitimate needs cross multiple federal, state, and private jurisdictions and programs.

Future habitat restoration strategies will be spawned from the expertise gained from HGM (comparative analysis of current topography, hydrology, and various soil surfaces) as extrapolated for developing a desired future condition within each River Reach. Congratulations to the St. Louis District, and I look forward to new and exciting authorities that all of us within the partnership can use in the furtherance of habitat conservation along the Middle Mississippi river corridor.

Furthermore, the strength of our Partnership has been increased with the addition of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Southern Illinois Community Foundation, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency Region 5 & 7.

Robert Cail
Chairman

THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

Recognizing the value of the MMRP, in June 2006 The McKnight Foundation awarded the Southwestern Illinois RC&D, Inc. a two-year grant to provide technical, administrative and outreach support to the Partnership. This award is an important step in the evolution of the Partnership as it provides the necessary resources to keep the Partnership moving forward in a unified fashion.

Recreation

“Increases in recreational areas/opportunities of adequate quality and quantity to meet the demands of local communities and visiting citizens.” *MMRP Coordination Plan, 2005*



Horseshoe Lake Fish and Wildlife Area

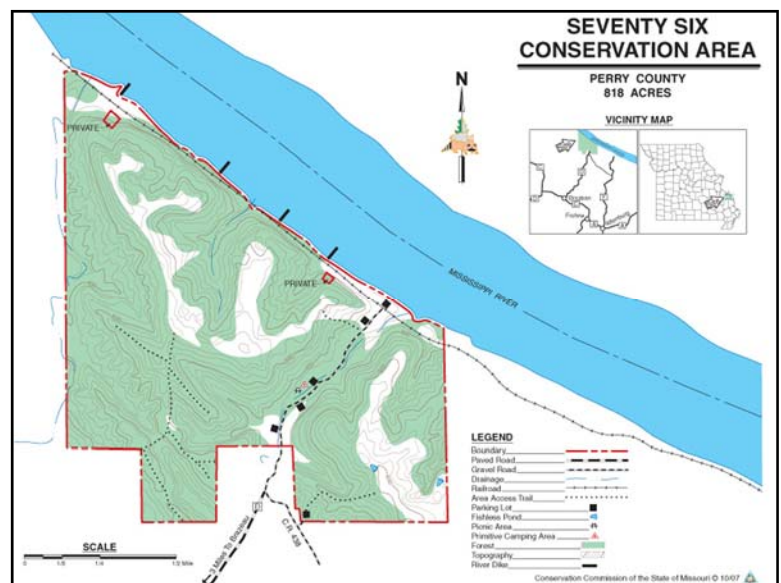
The 835 acre Gentle Tract was acquired in June 2007 using Hunter Heritage Funding. This land is located on the southeast corner of Horseshoe Lake Fish & Wildlife Area and forms an important connection to the Mississippi River to the south and Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge to the east. This property has excellent restoration potential and has significantly increased hunting opportunities in the area.

Union County Fish and Wildlife Area

At Union County Fish & Wildlife Area, Furbearer Funds (\$25,000, State of Illinois) have been used for a habitat restoration project. The project utilized a clay liner to seal an existing wetland and has greatly enhanced water level management in this important center portion of the refuge. This project benefits a variety of wildlife species and has been used extensively by migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. The area also provides excellent wildlife viewing opportunities. Plans are being developed for the construction of a hiking trail and wildlife viewing platform. Once completed, this project will provide the opportunity to view a variety of wildlife habitats including mature bottomland forests and shrub/scrub swamps.

Seventy-Six Conservation Area

As many river users know, there are few public access points on the Mississippi River. The Missouri Department of Conservation desires to improve river access and is building a new public boat ramp at the Seventy-Six Conservation Area in Perry County, Missouri. The boat ramp is 75% complete, with final construction awaiting river levels low enough to pour the ramp itself. A parking lot and public restrooms will also be constructed. The new facilities will be disabled accessible and they should be open to the public during the 2008 boating season.



Forests

“Forest lands managed and utilized to realize optimum benefit while providing protection, conservation, and enhancement of natural characteristics and biological diversity.” *MMRP Coordination Plan, 2005*

Colyer Farms Added to Mid-Miss Purchase Unit

The new Chief of the USDA Forest Service, Gail Kimbell, visited the Middle Mississippi River Purchase Unit in late July 2007 to see first-hand the restoration and partnership efforts of the Shawnee National Forest and its partners in the bottomlands.

The Shawnee National Forest acquired approx. 235 acres of wetland reserve program (WRP) property in Alexander County (IL) that was part of the historic Colyer Farm. The parcel is referred to as the Colyer South Property. The photo below is an aerial view of much of the Colyer Farms property. The Forest Service continues to acquire lands within its new Purchase Unit as funding and willing sellers are available.



The Forest Service also completed approximately 150 acres of reforestation work on some of the newly acquired floodplain properties. This project included planting of bald cypress, swamp white oak and pecan trees on the northern part of the historic Colyer Farm that the Partnership acquired in 2006. That work was done as part of a compatible use permit with USDA NRCS. Future projects include reforestation of another 150 acres on the newly acquired Colyer South Property in spring of 2008. The Colyer South Property is open for public recreation uses, primarily hunting, hiking, bird watching and nature study.

The Forest Service also created and filled a new position in late 2007 to work primarily on natural resource partnership projects including working heavily within the Middle Mississippi Partnership area. Steve Widowski, wildlife biologist at the Mississippi Bluffs Ranger District and current Middle Mississippi River Partnership representative from the Forest Service, was chosen for this position. He begins this position in January of 2008. The Forest Service envisions a stronger partnership commitment in the Middle Mississippi River purchase unit with the creation and filling of this new position.

MDC Enhances Bottomlands on Two Sites

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) continues the enhancement of bottomlands adjacent to the Mississippi River. Two small projects were recently completed in Perry and Cape Girardeau counties. At Red Rock Conservation Area in Perry County (MO), a seven-acre bottomland hardwood tree and big cane restoration project was completed to improve habitat conditions at a site that was leveled by a tornado in September 2006. The site is located near the confluence of Cinque Holmes Creek and the Mississippi River. Another bottomland restoration project was completed in the Mississippi River floodplain at Apple Creek Conservation Area in Cape Girardeau County (MO). A 15-acre bottomland oak “under-planting” was completed in an existing young black willow stand. This technique shows promise for re-introducing oak species into some floodplain sites.



Floodplain Management

“Corridor and floodplain providing a balance of flood control, navigation, drainage and wildlife benefits.” *MMRP Coordination Plan, 2005*

St. Louis Harbor Chevron Dikes Construction

Working towards correcting a chronic dredging site, three environmentally friendly chevron dikes were constructed during August and September in St. Louis harbor between RM 183.0-182.4 R. The first two are in between Merchants and McKinley Bridges and the third is just south of McKinley Bridge. These chevrons are part of a larger project that will also add several bendway weirs. In addition to working towards correcting a chronic dredging problem, these chevrons are also providing a more diverse aquatic habitat in this section of the river. Islands began forming behind the chevrons soon after construction. Biological monitoring had been taking place before construction and will continue during the upcoming year.



Wetlands

“Wetland functions and values providing long-term sustainable habitat for desired plants and animals.” *MMRP Coordination Plan, 2005*

“Ice Grain” Site Protected

The Mississippi River is an iconic feature of the American landscape. American Land Conservancy (ALC) continues to work to balance human use of the river with the needs of fish and wildlife through the selective conservation of critical habitat. “We help reconnect people to the river and boost nature tourism to riverside communities” said Jenny Frazier, Director of the Mississippi River Program.



In May 2007, ALC celebrated the donations of 251 acres to the Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge. The property connects the Cache River to the Mississippi River, creating a 30-mile forested corridor. The Cache River wetlands were designated as internationally important by the United Nations Ramsar Convention. This project was made possible through the generous support of the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, the help of Shawnee Resource Conservation and Development and the encouragement of state and local elected officials. The donation event included a canoe trip, hiking on the



property to the river, and an interpretative demonstration by US Fish & Wildlife Service staff.

In June 2007, American Land Conservancy was able to acquire 140 acres, and with the financial support of the Grand Victoria Foundation and Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, was able to donate it to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for inclusion in the Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge. The addition of this property to the refuge system will allow the US Fish & Wildlife Service to create larger contiguous blocks of reforested habitat to support wildlife and reduce fragmentation.

Missouri Wetland Acreage Acquired

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) recently acquired 63.21 acres in the Mississippi River floodplain in Scott County, Missouri. MDC completed a topographic assessment of the area, using a technique called "Poor-man's LIDAR", to aid in identifying potential management practices. MDC is working to enhance existing wetlands by re-establishing native aquatic vegetation and improving species diversity. A summer 2007 project established 10 floodplain exclosures and planted approximately 5 acres into aquatic plants. Species planted include water canna (*Thalia dealbata*), pickerel weed (*Pontederia cordata*), spatterdock (*Nuphar luteum*), square-stem spike rush (*Eleocharis quadrangulata*), arrowhead (*Sagittaria graminea*), broadfruted bur reed (*Sparganium eurycarpum*), American pondweed (*Potamogeton nodosus*), wild celery (*Vallisneria americana*), large-leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton amplifolius*) and wild rice (*Zizania aquatica*). The plants performed very well through the summer months and are beginning to expand beyond the exclosures. MDC also addressed invasive exotic plant and aggressive native species issues in the project area.

Illinois NRCS Restores 364 acre Wetland Complex

The Illinois Natural Resources Conservation Service (IL NRCS) continues to add to the growing number of wetland restoration projects in the Middle Mississippi Corridor by completing work this year on what is shaping up to be a complex of wetlands near Horseshoe Lake, in Alexander County.

Four adjacent property owners at this site have enrolled a total of 364 acres into NRCS's Wetlands Reserve Program over the past few years. The restoration work accomplished this summer involved the construction of 7,000 lineal feet of earthen dikes to impound water, restoring hydrology to the area. A layer of coarse sand, which had been deposited from the Great Flood of 1993, had to be removed from the work area before the construction could begin. Three water control structures were also installed to allow seasonal manipulation of water levels across 86 acres, offering management flexibility. Nearly 50 acres will be managed as a "green tree reservoir", where the water will be drawn off the trees during their growing season. This year's restoration work also included the planting of 29 acres to bottomland hardwood trees, adding to the 150 acres planted in 2004 at this WRP complex.

The popularity of the Wetlands Reserve Program in many areas like this has made it possible to "bundle" projects together, to accomplish restoration on a larger landscape scale. Each additional project compliments adjacent existing WRP restorations and similar projects of the Middle Mississippi Partnership.



Aquatic Habitat

“Healthy and diverse aquatic species populations through habitat restoration, development, management, and/or land protection.” *MMRP Coordination Plan, 2005*

Crain’s Island Added to the National Wildlife Refuge System

The US Fish and Wildlife Service Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge obtained ownership of 384 acres on Crain’s Island from the American Land Conservancy. Funds from the Lands Water Conservation Funds, moneys from sale receipts (timber sales, mineral rights) were used to purchase these ecologically significant acres. This remnant braided island/side channel is actually in Randolph County Illinois, but is located on what is now the Missouri side of the Mississippi River across from Chester.

Establishment Island

Work was completed in 2007 on two new chevron dikes and a rootless (notched) dike near Establishment Chute (RM 130). These structures were completed to improve a chronic navigation dredging site at this location. Use of chevron dikes and a rootless dike should allow for development of a small secondary channel at the site and creation of both shallow and over-wintering habitat for fish. Use of these structures should also help avoid impacts to the lower end of Establishment Chute. To help assess the impacts of the work, the Missouri Department of Conservation has been conducting pre-construction fisheries monitoring at the site. Post-construction monitoring will begin in 2009. The pre-construction report is available through the US Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Section.

Liberty Chute

Work on three new chevrons was completed in 2007 near Liberty Chute (RM 100). Originally the project was designed to be a series of longitudinal dikes that would improve a chronic dredging site at this location. It was later determined that chevrons could perform the same function in a more environmentally friendly manner. It is hoped that in addition to creating diverse habitat for aquatic species, shallow sandbars and potentially islands will form behind these structures.

Mel Price Fish Passage Study

Stationary hydroacoustic monitoring is currently being installed at the auxiliary lock at Mel Price Locks and Dam. Transducers will be located in the emergency bulkhead recesses upstream of the upstream miter gates. The transducers will collect data over the water column to help determine to what extent fish use the lock to travel from downstream to upstream of the locks and dam.

View the Middle Mississippi River Partnership Coordination Plan (2005) at:
http://www.swircd.org/swircd/projects/MMRP_Coord-Plan.htm

Wildlife Habitat

“Healthy and diverse wildlife populations through habitat restoration, development, management, and/or land protection.” *MMRP Coordination Plan, 2005*



Rockwood Island Restoration

American Land Conservancy, in partnership with Ducks Unlimited and Living Lands and Waters, assisted in planting 700 trees on Rockwood Island (IL) this past fall. With nearly 70 volunteers, this was the beginning of an on-the-ground effort to restore the habitat on Rockwood Island. The property is currently owned by Ducks Unlimited and once the restoration is complete, the land will be donated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for inclusion in the Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge. Living Lands and Waters supplied the trees and lunch for all of the participants in the planting.

Rockwood Island Division Growing

The US Fish and Wildlife Service, Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge received 21 additional acres from in-holders, made possible by funds obtained from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, and collaboration with the American Land Conservancy and the Southwestern Illinois RC&D, Inc. These lands are key tracts which will allow the furtherance of restoration projects to occur between Ducks Unlimited and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. More than 30% of the Rockwood Island complex is now under federal protection.

Conservation Fund Activities

The Conservation Fund was instrumental in attracting \$10.8 million from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation for the "Upper Midwest Wildlife Initiative" - the Middle Mississippi River Partnership was one of the solid land conservation partnerships that we could point to in the application process that would be a good investment for the foundation. Ducks Unlimited, The Conservation Fund and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation have joined together in this project to bring land capital to areas identified as priorities in each state's Wildlife Action Plans.

The Conservation Fund has been most active just upstream this year. After nearly 2 years of negotiations, The Conservation Fund and Great Rivers Land Trust (GRLT) completed the first of two phases of the Palisades Project in Alton, Illinois. The 430-acre preserve is a signature project for GRLT and is a bluff property on the Mississippi River. The Fund also financed the project for GRLT, whose last payment on the \$3.4 million project will be in early winter 2008, with a hoped-for grant from Ducks Unlimited through its Upper Midwest Wildlife initiative (Doris Duke Charitable Foundation).

The Conservation Fund is adding to its capacity in the form of Clint Miller, who will team-tag with Tom Duffus to increase our presence with the Middle Mississippi River Partnership.

Information & Outreach

“Recognition and support of the Partnership’s vision, programs, and services.” *MMRP Coordination Plan, 2005*

Middle Mississippi River Regional Corridor Study

The Middle Mississippi River Regional Corridor Study is in the second year of a two year collaborative study effort among federal, state, local and non-governmental interests within the Middle Mississippi River basin. The study has three major focus areas: extension and expansion of the MMRP, the completion of Geographic Information System (GIS)-based regional natural resource plans, and the completion of a hydrogeomorphic model



(HGM) for the Middle Mississippi River basin. To date, much of the GIS data has been gathered and compiled and is currently being developed into a useful planning tool. This tool is expected to be completed this spring. A draft version of the HGM has been completed and a final version is also expected in spring 2008. The study is being funded by the US Army Corps of Engineers and is expected to be complete by the summer of 2008.

One part of the MMRP collaborative planning effort is to update the goals, objectives, strategies, and actions from the Coordination Plan that was developed in 2005. To accomplish this task six workgroups were organized to address the original goal and objectives for each resource issue and add more specific strategies and actions that can be carried out over the next five years to help meet the goals and objectives in the plan.

The following workgroups met this past fall and early winter to begin the process of developing more specific strategies and actions:

- Forest, Wetland, and Wildlife
- Agricultural Production, Floodplain Management, and Economic Impact
- Aquatics and Water Quality
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Information and Outreach

The results of these sessions will be a revised set of goals, objectives, strategies, and actions that the Partnership will pursue over the next 5 years to help meet the resource concern goals and outcomes in the Coordination Plan.

Other Activities

Landowner Incentive Program

The Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) has been expanded to include all Illinois counties along the Mississippi River from Quincy to Cairo. This program provides cost share assistance for landowners interested in improving habitat for species in greatest need of conservation (Endangered and Threatened species and those listed in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan). This program is a cooperative effort with assistance provided by Soil & Water conservation Districts, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. In 2007, over 60 applications were submitted. The sites will be visited and ranked in the winter/spring of 2008.

The Landowner Incentive Program is an excellent tool for restoring habitats on private lands. However, the future of this program is uncertain. The LIP was not included in the Department of Interior's 2008 budget and the program will "sunset" in September 2010. For questions concerning LIP please contact Stan McTaggart at 217.741.6901.

Acres For Wildlife

The Acres for Wildlife Program assists landowners interested in improving wildlife habitat on private lands. This program develops management plans, provides seeds, tree and shrub seedlings, and other materials for habitat restoration. Within the Mississippi River floodplain, the program assists landowners with implementation of wetland enhancement projects. In the past year, over 95 acres of wetlands have been restored. Those interested in learning more about this program should contact their Illinois District Wildlife Biologist for further information.

WRP/RPM Bare Root Study

The Open Rivers and Wetland Field Station of the Missouri Department of Conservation and the Natural Resources Conservation Service are jointly working to learn more about bare root and RPM® (root-pruned method) trees. Objectives of the study include: 1) Compare the relationship of growth and survival of bare root and RPM® planting stock to treatments (control, fertilization, herbicide, and combination of fertilization and herbicide). 2) Compare the species specific responses (survival, growth and masting) of pecan (*Carya illinoensis*), pin (*Quercus palustris*), bur (*Quercus macrocarpa*), and swamp white (*Quercus bicolor*) oaks. 3) Determine the correlation of growth, survival and masting rates with soil type.

Light Level Needs – Hard Mast Tree Production

The Open Rivers and Wetlands Field Station and the Forestry Division of the Missouri Department of Conservation, initiated a study to learn more about hard mast tree production. The objective of the study is to determine the correlation between light levels in the forest understory to growth of hard mast producing species. The study will help determine the light level that allows for growth while keeping competition at a minimum.

Middle Mississippi River Partners

Federal Partners

Upper Mississippi River & Great Lakes Region Joint
Venture
US Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District
USDI Fish & Wildlife Service
USDI Geological Survey
USDA Forest Service
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
(Illinois, Missouri)
US Environmental Protection Agency

State Partners

Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Illinois Forestry Development Council

Missouri Department of Conservation
Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Southern Illinois University Carbondale -
Cooperative Wildlife Research Lab

Additional Partners

American Land Conservancy
Ducks Unlimited
Illinois Forestry Development Council
Illinois Society of American Foresters
Southern Illinois Community Foundation
Southwestern Illinois RC&D, Inc.
The Nature Conservancy
Wildlife Forever

Additional information related to the Middle Mississippi River Partnership can be obtained by contacting the individuals listed below, or by visiting www.midmiss.org

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