

**RESOLUTION ON
THE NEED TO ESTABLISH A COORDINATED,
COMPREHENSIVE WATER QUALITY MONITORING PROGRAM
FOR THE LOWER MISSISSIPPI RIVER**

Adopted February 3, 2023

WHEREAS, the Mississippi River is the fourth longest river in the world and the longest river in North America; and

WHEREAS, the Lower Mississippi River flows 954 river-miles from the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers at Cairo, Illinois to the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the aquatic natural resources of the Mississippi River provide significant recreational, commercial, and subsistence values to the States of Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee; the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley; and the Nation; and

WHEREAS, these resources provide substantial input to the economies of the States of Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee; the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley; and the Nation; and

WHEREAS, the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee (LMRCC) is a coalition of natural resource and environmental quality agencies from the six Lower Mississippi River states along with federal cooperating agencies and committed non-governmental organizations. The US Fish and Wildlife Service provides a coordinator and support; and

WHEREAS, LMRCC's mission is to "Promote the restoration and wise use of the natural resources of the Lower Mississippi River through cooperative efforts involving planning, management, information sharing, public education, advocacy and research"; and

WHEREAS, each of the six Lower Mississippi River states has the authority to set water quality standards and assess waters, and there are numeric and narrative standards applicable to the Mississippi River; and

WHEREAS, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has approved the standards and the most recent assessment produced by each state. The Lower Mississippi River, however, is conspicuously left out of water quality monitoring by state and federal agencies; and

WHEREAS, the Lower Mississippi River states do not have sufficient water quality monitoring programs of their own to assess water quality in the Mississippi River. Except for Louisiana, no Lower Mississippi River state has an ongoing water quality monitoring program on the Lower Mississippi River. Louisiana only monitors the lowest portion of the Mississippi River; the part fully within that state; and

WHEREAS, nutrient monitoring by United States Geological Survey (USGS) and others is being

used by a national strategy to resolve hypoxia problems in the Gulf of Mexico. For the Lower Mississippi River itself, states have not found a basis upon which to establish numeric nutrient standards, and nutrient impacts in the Lower Mississippi river have not been reported. No Lower Mississippi River state has assessed any of its portions of the river as impaired for nutrients; and

WHEREAS, some form of cooperative water quality monitoring effort for the Mississippi River is sorely needed because the Lower Mississippi River states are unlikely to marshal the resources individually, to initiate and sustain a robust water quality monitoring program on the Mississippi River; and

WHEREAS, the most careful and thorough analysis of the water quality conditions of the Mississippi River and the causes of those conditions was presented in a National Research Council (NRC 2008) report *MISSISSIPPI RIVER WATER QUALITY AND THE CLEAN WATER ACT: Progress, Challenges and Opportunities*; and

WHEREAS, the NRC (2008) report stated

“Although there are some important federally sponsored efforts in monitoring Mississippi River water quality—such as those conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Geological Survey, especially on the upper river—there is no single water quality monitoring program or central water quality database for the entire length of the Mississippi. Thus, there are limited amounts of water quality and related biological and ecological data for the full length of the Mississippi River, especially the lower river. This limited amount of data inhibits evaluations of water quality problems along the river and into the Gulf of Mexico, which in turn inhibits efforts to develop, assess, and adjust water quality restoration activities. Moreover, the limited attention devoted to monitoring the river’s water quality is not commensurate with the Mississippi River’s exceptional socioeconomic, cultural, ecological, and historical value. The lack of a centralized Mississippi River water quality information system and data gathering program hinders effective implementation of the Clean Water Act and acts as a barrier to maintaining and improving water quality along the Mississippi River and into the northern Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS in 2014, LMRCC’s survey of states and federal agencies found that the limited resources of the Lower Mississippi River states and the federal agencies prevent them from performing water quality monitoring to assess, manage and protect this vast and precious resource; and

WHEREAS the lack of water quality data on the Lower Mississippi River prevents full implementation of the Clean Water Act for this important national resource; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the members of the Southern Division, American Fisheries Society, assembled at their annual meeting on this 3rd day of February in the year 2023 at Norfolk, Virginia strongly recommend that the state fish and wildlife and environmental agencies in Lower Mississippi River states (Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee) along with the USGS and the USEPA work collectively and

collaboratively to plan and initiate a comprehensive water quality monitoring program and a central water quality database for the Lower Mississippi River; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southern Division, American Fisheries Society urges the aforementioned state agencies in Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee to work with their respective state legislatures, through the Southern Governors' Association, Council of State Governments Southern Office, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Interstate Council on Water Policy to urge those legislative bodies and the Congress of the United States to allocate sufficient funds to their state water quality agencies, the USGS and the USEPA to plan, initiate and sustain such a water quality monitoring program and a central water quality database for the Lower Mississippi River.