



**Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative**

**For Immediate Release: March 5, 2020**

**Contact:** Jim Gwinner, 314-791-2274, [jgwinner@LS2group.com](mailto:jgwinner@LS2group.com)

*Audio recording of the briefing will be available after 2 pm Central Time*

## **Mississippi River Mayors Amplify Staggering 2019 Flood Costs, Unveil Federal Policy Priorities, and Preview Flood Risk Outlook for 2020**

**March 5, 2020, Washington, DC** – Twenty mayors representing cities along the Mississippi River are gathered this week for the eighth Capitol meeting of the [Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative](#) (MRCTI) to communicate the costs of flooding to federal policymakers and push for a slate of solutions.

### **MRCTI 2020 Policy Platform**

On March 4 and 5, in meetings with House and Senate leadership and lawmakers charged with shepherding an infrastructure bill, the mayors presented their 2020 proposal to strengthen the essential natural and built infrastructure of the Mississippi River corridor and pushed for critical congressional support and investment to better protect communities against increasing risk.

This platform of 12 appropriation and four infrastructure priorities to address the acute shocks and chronic stresses the region has sustained, totaling more than \$205 billion in actual losses since 2005. This platform includes both existing and new programs, 35 percent of which is recommended to remain at current funding levels.

Mayors of the Mississippi River developed the \$6.85 billion proposal to build resilience, mitigate mounting climate risk, create more than 128,000 jobs, and generate more than \$20.5 billion in economic activity. This is done by supporting natural infrastructure programs, calling for the passage of a Resilience Revolving Loan Fund, including a recovery bond pilot in the next Water Resources Development Act, as well as resilience funding in the America's Transportation Infrastructure Act.

### **2019 Flood Economic Impact Analysis**

On Thursday, MRCTI released an economic impact analysis, compiled by the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, detailing the 2019 flood season, and reported losses exceeding \$20 billion across 19 states.

These costs include total direct losses (insured and uninsured assets), field crops (crop damage and prevented-planting), livestock, public infrastructure (levees, roads, bridges, dams, etc.), and damage to homes, businesses and vehicles. A detailed assessment of the costs now show:

- The total cost of the 2019 floods to the Mississippi River main stem corridor was \$6.2B for 11 states;
- The states in the main stem corridor that sustained the most costs from the 2019 floods were Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, and Arkansas, with each of these states incurring impacts of \$1 to \$2 billion;
- The states in the Mississippi River Basin that sustained the most costs from the 2019 floods were Nebraska and South Dakota with both states incurring \$2 to \$5 billion in damages;
- MRCTI cities that actually sustained some of the worst flooding including the Quad Cities, which realized a record flood level;
- MRCTI cities that sustained some of the worst impacts included Grafton, IL which lost 80 percent of its economy, and Vidalia, LA which witnessed 270 consecutive days of flooding, a new national record.

“There is definitely an upward trend we can chart over the last few years,” said **Hon. Bob Gallagher, Mayor of Bettendorf, Iowa and MRCTI Co-Chair**. “The spatial scale and duration of the 2019 Central U.S. flooding set many records. According to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, it's plausible to expect this trend to be more frequent with damaging riverine and urban floods to continue.”

### **The Science of Increasing Floods**

The 2019 flooding is part of a trend of more billion-dollar, non-hurricane, inland flood disasters in the last decade (2010-2019) than have occurred over the previous three decades combined (1980-2009). Strong attribution science shows that [climate change is a major factor](#) driving increasing frequent and severe flooding up and down America's largest waterway, contributing at least 18 separate billion-dollar inland flood disasters over the last decade compared to a total of 14 such disaster events over the previous 30 years.

Last week, the National Weather Service released its spring hydrologic outlook showing that the trend is expected to continue. Current indications suggest the 2020 flood season will be less severe than last year, but the Mississippi River corridor still faces significant risk. High levels of snow in the northern headwaters region and an above average precipitation outlook for March suggest a 50 percent chance for moderate flooding in much of the Mississippi Valley, with a high percent chance of major flooding in the upper and mid-Mississippi Valley.

“This all begs the question of what we’re doing to address these issues and mitigate our seemingly mounting risk,” said **Hon. Sharon Weston Broome, Mayor of Baton Rouge, Louisiana and MRCTI Co-Chair**. “Meeting these challenges is part of the reason for the MRCTI visit to Washington, DC.”

### **The Environmental Impact Bond Challenge**

Mississippi River cities are working to meet the heavy recovery costs and mounting disaster risk through multiple partnerships and innovative financing vehicles. Environmental Impact Bonds offer cities a way to pay for resilient infrastructure based on the outcomes these projects actually achieve, rather than paying for projects themselves and hoping for the best. In this way, they can help make public spending more efficient and capitalize on the multiple benefits of these projects.

Today, MRCTI announced winners of their Environmental Impact Bond Challenge, in partnership with outcomes-based capital firm Quantified Ventures and with support from the McKnight and Walton Family Foundations. Through the Challenge, Quantified Ventures will bring its expertise structuring Environmental Impact Bonds to help communities finance more natural and resilient infrastructure throughout the river corridor that previously lacked access to funding. New Orleans, Louisiana, and Memphis, Tennessee, both MRCTI cities, were the two winners of the Environmental Impact Bond Challenge. New Orleans will use its Environmental Impact Bond to scale green mortgage offerings from the Finance Authority of New Orleans (FANO) as well as capitalize a Green Infrastructure Fund to implement resilience projects throughout the city. Memphis will focus its Environmental Impact Bond on financing a suite of green infrastructure projects concentrated in the Fairgrounds and Beltline neighborhoods to reduce local flooding, improve water quality, provide community green space, and revitalize underutilized areas.

“It’s wonderful to win the first Environmental Impact Bond grant from MRCTI and Quantified Ventures, and congratulations to our neighbors a little upstream in Memphis,” said **Hon. LaToya Cantrell, Mayor of New Orleans, Louisiana**. “We hope the success of these two projects yields more EIB deployments throughout our region for natural infrastructure.”

# # #

**Audio from this morning's press conference will be available after 2PM Central Time today, please contact Jim Gwinner at [jgwinner@LS2group.com](mailto:jgwinner@LS2group.com) for that file.**

### **Mayors Attending the MRCTI Capitol Meeting and Available for Media Inquiries:**

- Hon. Bob Gallagher – City of Bettendorf, IA & MRCTI Co-Chair
- Hon. Sharon Weston Broome – City of Baton Rouge, LA & MRCTI Co-Chair
- Hon. Rita Albrecht – City of Bemidji, MN
- Hon. Sean Dowse – City of Red Wing, MN
- Hon. Tim McNeil – City of Dayton, MN
- Hon. Timothy Kabat – City of La Crosse, WI
- Hon. Roy Buol – City of Dubuque, IA

- Hon. Ray Allen – City of LeClaire, IA
- Hon. Mike Bawden – City of Riverdale, IA
- Hon. Rick Eberlin – City of Grafton, IL
- Hon. Robert Eastern – City of East St. Louis, IL
- Hon. Phil Stang – City of Kimmswick, MO
- Hon. Kevin Smith – City of Helena-West Helena, AR
- Hon. Errick Simmons – City of Greenville, MS
- Hon. George Flaggs, Jr. – City of Vicksburg, MS
- Hon. Darryl Grennell – City of Natchez, MS
- Hon. Buz Craft – City of Vidalia, LA
- Hon. Cornell Dukes – City of New Roads, LA
- Hon. Lionel Johnson – City of St. Gabriel, LA
- Hon. Belinda Constant – City of Gretna, LA

**Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative (MRCTI)** is a coalition of 95 mayors from across the Mississippi River Basin, which spans nearly a third of the country. The Mississippi River provides drinking water to more than 20 million people and 50 cities. More than 80 billion gallons of fresh water is withdrawn from the river daily for manufacturing and energy supply. The River's resources support 1.5 million jobs and create \$496.7 billion in annual revenue.

**NOAA Resources** – The 2019 flood and disaster data are available to the public through NOAA's "Billion-Dollar Disasters" website. An interactive map on frequency and costs is also available at this link where the public can see all impact data collected mapped-out across the Mississippi River Basin. <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/mapping>