

Rep. Kind: Holds press conference with Large Rivers Specialist Gretchen Benjamin on legislation to protect to the Mississippi

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La Crosse, WI —Today, **Rep. Ron Kind** held a Zoom press conference with Gretchen Benjamin, the Large Rivers Specialist at the Nature Conservancy, to discuss the bipartisan *Water Resources Development Act (WRDA)*, which passed the House of Representatives on July 29, 2020. This legislation would authorize the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to carry out vital water infrastructure projects and studies. The bill would boost our economy amid the COVID-19 pandemic by creating jobs while investing in necessary projects like flood damage reduction, shoreline protection, inland waterways improvement, and ecosystem restoration.

“The Mississippi is part of our DNA here in Wisconsin, and supports our local economies through outdoor recreation, tourism, and commercial navigation,” said **Rep. Kind**. “We have a responsibility to be good stewards of this beautiful and impactful watershed, preserving it for generations to come. WRDA lives up to this promise, including critical funding for ecosystem restoration, navigation infrastructure, long-term water resource planning and flood mitigation. It’s up to all of us to do our part to protect the Mississippi River and work together at the local, state, and federal level to preserve this important resource.”

Rep. Kind and Benjamin discussed provisions in the bill that would improve resources for the Mississippi River, including:

- Increase funding for Upper Mississippi River System Environmental Management Program

- Establish a national policy that recognizes the economic and environmental value in reusing clean dredged materials for ecosystem restoration or storm damage reduction projects
- Authorize a plan to assess the water resource needs of the Upper Mississippi
- Invest in the construction of inland waterways projects and the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) for the Upper Mississippi River
- Authorize the Great Lakes Mississippi River inter-basin study on ecosystem restoration
- Increase funding to \$15 million for the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program, based out of the Upper Midwest Environment Sciences Center in La Crosse, WI

Rep. Kind is the founder and co-chair of the Upper Mississippi River Basin Task Force, and a co-chair of the Congressional Mississippi River Caucus and the Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus. He been a longtime champion of protecting the Mississippi River for the people of Wisconsin's Third Congressional District.