

Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative



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Mayors Select New Leadership for Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative; Memphis' Wharton and Dubuque's Buol Take Over Effort to Give River a Unified Voice

ST. CLOUD, MN—Mayors AC Wharton of Memphis, TN and Roy Buol of Dubuque, IA were selected by their peers as co-chairs to lead the [Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative \(MRCTI\)](#), a mayoral-led effort to create a coordinated voice for the Mississippi River. Wharton and Buol take over for MRCTI's inaugural co-chairs—Mayors David Kleis, St. Cloud, MN and Francis Slay, St. Louis, MO, who served one-year terms. MRCTI is comprised of 55 Mississippi River Mayors, nearly half of whom were in town for MRCTI's second annual organizational meeting.

“MRCTI is headed in the right direction to provide a common voice to protect and nurture our nation's most important waterway. It's been a privilege to serve as co-chairs. We know Mayors Wharton and Buol are ready to step in and continue building this effort that will result in a more robust river and healthier communities,” explained Mayors Kleis and Slay. “We will continue to be active supporters of MRCTI since together we are stronger advocates for the River.”

In addition, these Mayors were chosen for the MRCTI Executive Committee: MN - Dave Kleis, St. Cloud; WI - Mark Huber, Prescott; IA - Mark Vulich, Clinton; IL - Tom Thompson, Grafton; MO - Jo Anne Smiley, Clarksville; KY - David Lattus, Hickman; MS - Larry 'Butch' Brown, Natchez; and LA - Hiram Copeland, Vidalia. The committee also added a Founder's Seat for Francis Slay, St. Louis.

More than 20 MRCTI Mayors participated in the meeting, including: Francis Slay, St. Louis, MO – Co-Chair; David Kleis, St. Cloud, MN – Co-Chair; Rita Albrecht, Bemidji, MN; Larry Brown, Natchez, MS; Roy Buol, Dubuque, IA; Hiram Copeland, Vidalia, LA; Bill Gluba, Davenport, IA; Brad Gunderson, Sauk Falls, MN; Mark Huber, Prescott, WI; David Lattus, Hickman, KY; Darrel Olson, Baxter, MN; Joe Perske, Sartell, MN; Harry Rediger, Cape Girardeau, MO; Jo Anne Smiley, Clarksville, MO; Tom Thompson, Grafton, IL; Cathy VanRisseghem, Little Falls, MN; Mark Vulich, Clinton, IA and A.C. Wharton, Memphis, TN.

Modeled after the successful [Great Lakes & St. Lawrence Cities Initiative](#), MRCTI is an effort coordinated by the [Northeast-Midwest Institute \(NEMWI\)](#) with funding from the Walton Family Foundation to create an influential voice for the Mississippi River that dramatically increases demand for effective river protection, restoration and management in Washington, D.C. The recent severe drought and floods severely impacted the towns, cities and people who live and make a living along the Mississippi River highlighted the urgent need for a unified effort to protect and sustain the River.

As the ecological linchpin to the 37-state Mississippi River Basin, the River is responsible for creating \$105 billion worth of U.S. GDP; providing drinking water for more than 18 million; transporting 62 percent of our nation's agricultural output; delivering nearly 400 tons of coal and petroleum products; and directly supporting one million jobs and millions more indirectly.

For questions concerning the MRCTI, contact NEMWI's Colin Wellenkamp at 314-324-8781.

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