



# Questions and Answers about the Midwest Natural Resources Group

## 1. What is the Midwest Natural Resources Group?

The Midwest Natural Resources Group is a partnership effort to bring focus and excellence to federal activities in support of the health, vitality and sustainability of natural resources and the environment.

## 2. What is the purpose of the Midwest Natural Resources Group?

To develop processes, marshal resources among agencies and partners, seek opportunities for collaboration and communication, and provide timely assistance where it is needed. The agencies within the Group are committed to bringing results to the American public in communities of the Midwest.

## 3. When and why was the Midwest Natural Resources Group founded?

The Group was formally established in 1998. The agencies agreed on the need to attain proactive coordination, eliminate duplication and clearly establish the proper role for each federal bureau or agency within the 12 geographical area focus areas of the Big Rivers and the Great Lakes basins.

## 4. Who belongs to the Midwest Natural Resources Group?

Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Bureau of Land Management  
Department of Energy  
Federal Highway Administration  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
National Park Service  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Office of Surface Mining  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
US Coast Guard  
US Environmental Protection Agency  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
US Forest Service  
US Geological Survey

## 5. What are the goals of the Midwest Natural Resources Group?

The Group agreed to maximize their efforts for the benefit of the Midwest communities. They agreed to analyze federal and partnership activities in the focus areas to coordinate, identify and enhance accomplishments of existing efforts; explore new opportunities for cooperation and collaboration; and better report to Congress and the American public regarding Federal progress and results. This accountability is required by the Government Performance and Results Act.

## 6. How were these focus areas identified?

Teams of agency representatives documented initial findings and action plans for the federal partnerships. The members analyzed the environmental and natural resources of an area and reason why an area should be designated a priority focus area using the following criteria: background and description of the area's natural resource and environmental benefits, including economic benefits; challenges to environmental health and well-being; actions needing to be accomplished toward environmental and natural resource goals; the federal role toward meeting environmental and natural resource goals; and partners, stakeholders and their role(s) in these efforts.

7. What are the focus areas and who has the leads in those areas?

The Big Rivers Basin Focus Areas include:

Illinois River – US Fish & Wildlife

Minnesota River - US Fish & Wildlife

Missouri River – National Park Service

Ozark Plateau – Bureau of Land Management

Upper Mississippi River – Natural Resources Conservation Service & EPA

Ohio River – US Army Corps of Engineers

The Great Lakes Basin Focus Areas include:

Detroit River/St. Claire River – US Environmental Protection Agency

Fox River/Green Bay – US Fish and Wildlife Service

Great Lakes – US EPA & US Army Corps of Engineers

Saginaw River and Bay – US Fish and Wildlife Service

Southern Lake Erie – US Geological Survey

Southern Lake Michigan – US EPA

8. What has been accomplished by this group?

The focus area teams gather several times a year to monitor programs underway at multiple agencies and bring together key partners to focus federal efforts on important issues. This coordination fosters strategic partnerships for innovative solutions to environmental and natural resource problems. Each focus group has examples of how these partnerships have worked for the benefits of the communities of the Midwest. Several groups have completed demonstration projects.

9. How often do they meet?

The senior leaders meet three times a year, February, May and November. Once a year they meet with the focus groups at an Environmental Roundtable in November. The Focus Area Groups meet periodically throughout the year to monitor progress, coordinate activities, and discuss initiatives, issues and concerns.

10. Where can I find additional information?

Additional information is available from any of the agencies involved and at our web site at

<http://www.mnrg.gov/>

11. Why is this group limited to the Midwest and why these boundaries?

The Midwest region of the country has unique challenges that are unlike those of coastal regions. The Big Rivers of the Midwest with their ecosystems, wildlife and inland waterway navigation and the Great Lakes natural fresh water lakes pose different challenges and require regionally coordinated solutions. The regional boundaries of a number of federal agencies and the natural landscape of watersheds and topography determined the geographic boundaries of the Group's area.

12. Are states and other local and citizen groups involved?

State agencies and local units of government, tribes, non-profit and citizen groups participate as partners in projects in each of the Midwest Natural Resources Group Focus Areas.