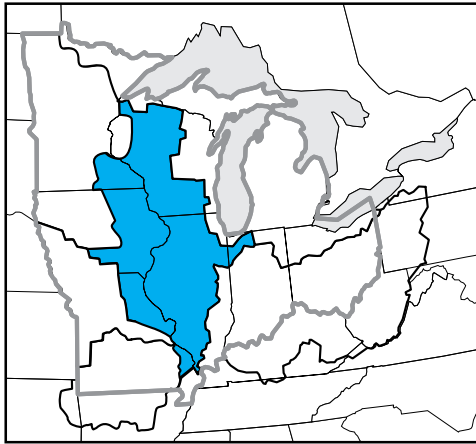




Upper Mississippi River - Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem



USFWS Field Stations

Twenty-seven field stations are located within the ecosystem: 18 National Wildlife Refuges; 1 Fish Health Center; 1 Fishery Resources Office; 1 Private Lands Office; 1 Wetland Management District; 1 National Fish Hatchery; 1 Law Enforcement Office; 3 Ecological Services Offices.

Partners

Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Missouri Departments of Conservation and Natural Resources, U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S.G.S. Environmental Sciences Center, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and HoChunk Nation.

Ecosystem Description

The Upper Mississippi River Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem encompasses portions of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri and Wisconsin. The ecosystem is bisected by the Mississippi River and includes portions of contributing watersheds formed by the Minnesota, Chippewa, Black, Wisconsin, Iowa, Rock, Illinois, and Kaskaskia Rivers.

Landscape Priorities

Four priorities for landscape improvement have been identified by the Upper Mississippi River Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem team. The priorities center around Regional Resource Conservation Priority species and were developed with a recognition that landscape scale change requires the collaboration of all conservation partners in the ecosystem.

■ *Eliminate Adverse Impacts of Aquatic Nuisance Species*

Limit the spread and monitor the movement of such introduced species as the round goby in the Illinois River and zebra mussels in the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers. Exotic species are spreading throughout the ecosystem, adversely affecting the native fauna of rivers and streams. Research, management treatments, and monitoring will be required.

■ *Restore/Improve Floodplain Habitats*

Floodplain restoration and protection are critical to the needs of migratory bird and other regional priority resources. Reforestation, acquisition of lands, habitat improvement projects and environmental review of Federal water development projects are ongoing activities of the team. Upland watershed treatment to mitigate adverse impact on floodplain resources is integral to goal accomplishment.

■ *Recover Endangered Species*

The Karner Blue Butterfly Habitat Conservation Plan is one example of ongoing recovery efforts in the ecosystem. Similar efforts for other listed and candidate species such as the winged mapleleaf, Higgins' Eye Pearly mussel and eastern massassagua are endorsed by the team.

■ *Restore/Improve Watersheds*

To address long-term needs of fish and wildlife resources the team promotes a collaborative watershed partnership with private landowners, watershed groups, tribal governments and local, state and Federal agencies and organizations. Watersheds such as the Illinois, Rock, Iowa and Skunk Rivers are major contributors of nutrient runoff in the Mississippi River Basin. Nutrient runoff, particularly nitrogen, is a known factor that causes periods of low dissolved oxygen (hypoxia) in the Gulf of Mexico. Treatment within watersheds to include wetland restoration, riparian buffer strip planting, and prairie or forest restoration will help improve water quality through sediment and nutrient filtration.

Contacts

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<http://midwest.fws.gov/ecosys/upmiss>