

1st Fox River Summit

22 March 2013, Burlington, Wisconsin

Celebrating Success & Addressing Shared Challenges

DECLARATION

PREAMBLE

The Fox (Illinois) River is an important water resource shared by the states of Illinois and Wisconsin. The waters of the Fox River have been instrumental in the development and sustenance of the communities that form the shared basin. The finite quantity of water is distributed across surface and groundwater dimensions which are linked. Collectively these waters support human quality of life, environmental quality, healthy economic growth, recreation, and agricultural production. These demands have placed increasing stress on the shared water resources through overexploitation and degradation of water quality and quantity. The resultant stresses have resulted in the degradation of many life-supporting services provided by the Fox River, being expressed in the form of environmental degradation, increased human health impacts, decreased food security and lost economic development opportunities. Water quality also has been affected by increasing population, urbanization, industrialization, recreation, and food and fuel plant production. More recent threats, such as extreme climatic events (droughts, floods), have impacted both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and the human communities of the Fox River basin. In addition, ongoing human activities such as abstraction for water supply, waste- and storm-water discharges, and channelization have degraded the River and its tributaries. These impairments have led to further demands for good quality water and for the benefits provided by good quality water, which are proposed to be addressed in part through inter-basin water transfers and ongoing and more intensive demand management.



ACCORDINGLY, THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE 1ST FOX RIVER SUMMIT, 22 MARCH 2013, IN BURLINGTON, WISCONSIN, USA:

Acknowledging that freshwater is fundamental for all life in the Fox River basin, being finite in quantity, unevenly distributed, sensitive to human activities, and irreplaceable in its many uses;

Conscious of the fact that the hydrologic linkages between flowing (lotic) and pooled (lentic) water systems fundamentally influence the availability and nature of all water systems;

Aware that the Fox River is fundamentally interlinked with wetlands, lakes, tributaries, groundwater and ultimately the Mississippi River and coastal water system;

Recognizing the value of comprehensive approaches such as Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in advancing the notion of an integrated approach to managing water resources, and wishing to advance this approach by due consideration of the need to:

- manage water as a single resource,
- manage natural water systems according to watershed boundaries,
- consider how upstream actions affect downstream uses,
- coordinate regulatory programs and actions,
- merge water quantity and quality programs,
- jointly manage surface and ground water,
- integrate water uses, withdrawals, discharges, run-off, and instream flows based on science or real data,
- consider water supply needs for human and ecological communities,
- plan regionally and implement locally,
- collaborate across jurisdictions on a watershed basis,
- understand that the economic and environmental values are linked, and,
- inform and protect our shared waters at the local level.

Deeply concerned over the unprecedented negative impacts on aquatic ecosystems from human activities, including possible irreversible changes with negative implications for economic and social development, and the sustainability of aquatic ecosystems, their basins, their resources and their services; and,

Acknowledging that, although progress in water resources management has been made in both states independently, substantial governance, capacity and financial deficiencies remain as fundamental issues to be addressed at all governmental levels.

THEREFORE, THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE 1ST FOX RIVER SUMMIT RECOMMEND:

- That Governments, NGOs, civil society, industry and agriculture strive to implement practical, participatory approaches for managing lakes, reservoirs, wetlands, rivers, groundwater, coastal and other water systems for sustainable use, and for enhancing human and ecosystem health, including due consideration of the potential impacts of extreme water-related events such as drought and floods;

- That full consideration of the hydrologic linkages between flowing and pooled freshwater systems and associated wetlands and groundwater aquifers is deemed essential for effective water system management and ecosystem functioning, including protection of groundwater recharge and discharge, protection of shorelands, promote de-fragmentation within the river corridor and its tributaries, and utilization of best management practices on the landscape in both rural and urban settings;
- That monitoring, modeling and information sharing networks for tracking the quantity and quality of streamflow, lake level, and groundwater, and improving management programs particularly focused on water use and reuse to balance the competing needs of ecosystem health with municipal, agricultural, industrial, and recreational uses, be created, expanded, or enhanced to provide a more accurate and robust assessment of the status of the water resources in the two states.
- That safe recreational use opportunities be expanded across the Fox River system, taking due cognizance of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge and similar trans-boundary initiatives linking land and water trails as examples of ongoing cooperation and collaboration within the basin, in order to enhance and expand connection between people and the natural landscape with emphasis on providing access to the waterway by women, youth, and under-represented communities;
- That maintaining the ecosystem services provided by the Fox River water system be considered an essential component of water management efforts, with particular attention directed to the regulating services that underpin the provisioning and cultural services utilized by humanity;
- That efforts are made to educate and inform water users and stakeholders at all levels, including women, youth, under-represented people, of their impacts on aquatic ecosystems, roles in ensuring safe recreation, and also of their potential roles in facilitating both ecosystem health and sustainable development in the Fox River basin;
- That educational opportunities be provided to recreational water users, students and community groups to enhance recreational use safety, including safe boating programs, programs to limit the spread of nonnative species, and safe swimming programs;
- That integrated water management approaches be undertaken in the Fox River basin through gradual, continuous and holistic improvement of basin governance, including sustained efforts directed to integrating institutional responsibilities, policy directions, stakeholder participation, scientific and traditional knowledge, technological possibilities and funding prospects and constraints;
- That management of freshwater systems of the Fox River basin, whether flowing or pooled, wetland or groundwater, be recognized as an iterative (stepwise, cyclical, and repetitive) process of ongoing and continuous adaptive management, comprising assessment, implementation, evaluation and revision of actions over time, rather than being considered as a single program;
- That Governments and water stakeholders at all levels in both states recognize that continuous and adequate financial support, as well as appropriate technical and governance capacity, are essential and continuing requirements for managing the Fox River system for sustainable use;

- That Governments use past experiences and lessons learned in a wide range of environmental and socioeconomic settings, particularly the daunting challenges hindering sustainable water resources, as exemplified by the current invasive species infestations, unprecedented flood and drought cycles in the Midwest, and proposed/potential inter-basin diversions of water from Lake Michigan, to guide development and implementation of integrated water management actions and programs in the Fox River basin; and,
- That the Summit be reconvened periodically to provide a forum among all stakeholders to share ideas, celebrate success, and address emerging concerns within the Fox River Basin.

The participants make these recommendations with a view to advancing an integrated approach to managing lakes, reservoirs, rivers, wetlands, groundwaters and coastal water systems, and their environmental and governance inter-linkages in the Fox River basin, to meet human needs and maintain aquatic ecosystems and their services for present and future generations.

This declaration was unanimously adopted by acclamation, this 22nd day of March 2013.