



**THE IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE
OF AMERICA**

707 Conservation Lane
Gaithersburg, MD 20878-2983
Phone: (301) 548-0150
Fax: (301) 548-0146

MIDWEST OFFICE
1619 Dayton Ave., Suite 202
St. Paul, MN 55104
Phone: (651) 649-1446
Fax: (651) 649-1494

WWW.IWLA.ORG

Missouri River Recovery Program

The Missouri River basin once contained complex habitats for almost 160 species of wildlife and more than 150 species of fish. Today the “Big Muddy” is no longer slow, meandering, and full of the sediment that inspired its nickname. Instead, structural changes by the Army Corps of Engineers transformed the river into a series of deep, cold-water reservoirs in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota and a narrow, fast-flowing channel between Nebraska and Iowa and through Missouri. Bank stabilization projects and the creation of reservoirs eliminated more than 3 million acres of river habitat. Straightening the river damaged natural river systems – wetlands, flood plains, sandbars – and endangered more than 80 species of plants and wildlife.



The Izaak Walton League is working with stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels to restore some of the Missouri River’s natural functions to benefit fish and wildlife. Fortunately, what’s good for the recovery of the river is also good for water quality, wetland functions, flood protection, outdoor recreation, and local economies.

Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation

Hunting, fishing, boating, and other types of outdoor recreation help fuel the economies of Missouri River basin states. An incredible network of lands, waters, and other natural resources – often with the Missouri River as a focal point – support these activities.



According to the *2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*, produced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, participation rates for wildlife-related recreation in Missouri River states are the highest in the country. In the region called West North Central (North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri), which includes six of the eight Missouri River states:

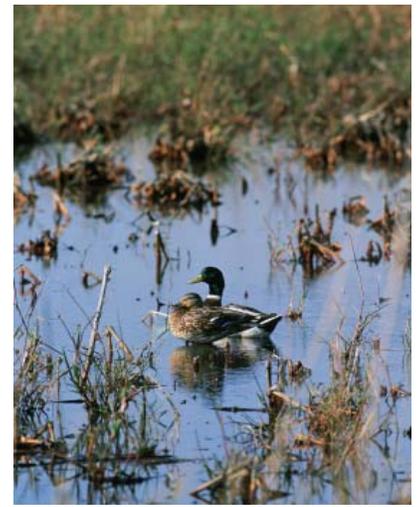
- Hunting participation among residents is 12 percent (compared with a national rate of 5 percent)
- Fishing participation among residents is 21 percent (compared with 13 percent nationally)
- Around-the-home wildlife-watching rates are 42 percent (compared with a 30 percent national rate).

Although this region has just 7 percent of the nation’s total population, 25 percent of residents hunt or fish (the highest percentage of a regional population in the

country). Participation in wildlife-associated recreation by residents and visitors in the West North Central states totals more than 9 million people per year. Montana adds 950,000 participants each year; Wyoming another 762,000.

Annual expenditures for wildlife-associated recreation in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming combined is \$8.9 billion. In addition, according to research conducted for the Outdoor Industry Foundation by Southwick Associates, estimated economic activity in West North Central states related to paddling reaches \$889 million per year.

Hunting, fishing, paddling, and wildlife watching provide tremendous economic benefits at the state and local levels. And each of these activities depends on clean water and healthy ecosystems.



Planning Today for a Healthy Missouri River

The Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan (MRERP) is a blueprint for long-term river restoration. The Corps of Engineers is collaborating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to identify ways to mitigate losses of land and water habitat, recover federally listed species under the Endangered Species Act, and restore ecosystems to prevent further declines among native species. The primary focus of the program is to identify actions needed to restore ecosystem resources (trees, wetlands, soil) and enhance processes (water flows, animal life cycles) that are critical to the well being of communities and citizens in the Missouri River basin.

An important benefit of restoring river ecosystems is improving ecosystem services, including flood protection. Between 1780 and 1980, for example, 85 to 93 percent of wetlands in the Missouri River basin were drained or filled, which eliminated the natural flood reduction benefits wetlands provide. Restoring wetlands and backwaters along the river will improve flood protection as well as increase fish and wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation opportunities.

For more information, please contact:

Paul Lepisto, Missouri River Regional Conservation Coordinator
Izaak Walton League of America
Pierre, South Dakota
plepisto@iwla.org
(605) 224-1770