Introduction to the Mississippi River Watershed Report Card

- Overview
  - Why a report card?
  - What are we grading?
  - The process of generating a report card
  - The report card: what it is and what it isn’t
Why a report card?

- Starting in 2009, USACE and TNC partnered with Meridian Institute to conduct focus groups and interviews in the watershed.

- A key goal of engagement was/is to keep a diversity of interests at the table.

- AWI was proposed at the America’s Inner Coast Summit in St. Louis (2010) with a goal of uniting the watershed.
Why a report card?

• There was consensus (in surveys by Meridian and among summit participants) that the system could not support the needs of all stakeholders if they continued to work in isolation

• There was, and is, a clear need for effective & coordinated governance of watershed resources

• Also clear that effective governance would have to follow the science – decisions must be data-driven
Why a report card?

- Examples already existed for how to compile and assess large scale environmental data
  - The Oceans project of the Pew Charitable Trust
  - The Puget Sound Dashboard of Vital Signs
  - The Chesapeake Bay Report Card

- America’s Great Watershed Initiative Summit in 2012
  - AWI officially launched
  - A Report Card for the Mississippi River watershed was discussed
  - Stakeholders set the goals for the watershed (what to monitor and measure)
  - AWI is not the people on stage, it’s YOU
What are we grading?

• A report card should measure what we value

• AGWI 2012 Summit identified six values as goals for the watershed:
  • to serve as the nation’s most valuable river Transportation corridor
  • to maintain an abundant, clean Water Supply
  • to provide reliable Flood Control and risk reduction
  • to support the local, state, and national Economy
  • to support and enhance healthy, productive Ecosystems
  • to provide opportunities for world-class Recreation
The Process

• Process is critical – the report card could not be generated by a few interested people

• Participation was, and is, actively sought
  • multiple workshops – not dominated by one basin
  • seeking diverse partners – not dominated by one sector
  • informed input – basin leaders and experts engaged

• The process is intended to yield a tool to move us toward effective and cooperative governance
Geographic Diversity

America’s Watershed Initiative

Within the Mississippi River Watershed boundaries there are 31 states and 41% of the land mass of the contiguous 48 states.
Diversity of Interests & Issues
The Product

• The report card is NOT the goal, it is an important tool that will help get to the goal of sustainable management of this amazing resource

• Today’s version is a work in progress
  • some data are reliable and analyses are robust
  • some data may not be sufficient for what we want to measure
  • some analytical methods and/or methods for assigning grades still need improvement
The Product

• Today’s version continues the conversation started in 2009

• Grades have known meanings, but deep assessment is nuanced – we need your help in telling a clear, accurate and compelling story

• We are close to doing something historic. Let’s finish what we have started!
Thank You!

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- You!