**Key Messages for America’s Watershed Initiative Report Card**

*NOTE: These are intended to be used by communications professionals or spokespersons working to promote the AWI Report Card; these key messages are not intended for distribution to the public. Also note that all promotional materials for the Report Card are not to be released prior to Wednesday, October 14, at 10 Central Time.*

America’s Watershed is vast. It spans nearly half of the United States, including 31 states and two Canadian provinces. More than half of all goods and services in America are produced with water flowing through this system.

America’s Watershed Initiative has engaged more than 400 business, government and science organizations to find solutions for the serious challenges we face in managing the Mississippi River and the 250 rivers that flow into it.

The Report Card for America’s Watershed assigns a D+ grade overall but reveals many opportunities to improve our economy and our ecology, and secure our water supplies if we **act together now.**

**America's Watershed:** **RAISE THE GRADE** with shared solutions that improve our rivers and economy

**Our heartland rivers make up America’s Watershed – a vital river system that provides drinking water, recreation, habitat, and serves as an economic engine for America.**

* America’s Watershed provides clean drinking water for millions of people and water for farms and ranches that produce $54 billion of food and goods each year.
* The transportation network in our heartland rivers safely, reliably and efficiently moves millions of tons of goods, generating billions in economic value.
* Rivers and wetlands provide wildlife habitat, recreation, drinking water filtration, and flood control & risk reduction for thousands of communities.
* Modern infrastructure and a healthy ecosystem work together to provide food, water and energy security.

**Hundreds of businesses, government agencies and scientific organizations graded the state of America’s Watershed a D+ overall using best available data. They also identified many opportunities for improvement.**

* Pollution from urban and rural sources threatens clean drinking water for millions of Americans.
* Aging levees, locks and dams in need of re-investment weaken America’s ability to transport and export food and goods, and reduce flood protection for communities.
* Rising global food and energy demands, and more extreme weather events are impacting public safety, water quantity and quality, and wildlife.

**We must work together to scale up solutions for improving water quality and quantity, safety, and the health of America’s Watershed so that we advance in the 21st century**

* Advocate for $1 billion annually in new public and private investment to ensure that America’s Watershed continues to drive our national economy, and protect the livelihoods and environments of future generations.
* Encourage greater collaboration and improved information to better manage an increasingly complex system for multiple benefits. We support a more transparent, integrated approach for decision-making, where stakeholders are engaged at a watershed scale in setting goals based on best available information.
* Recognize and support local leaders who develop and implement solutions and inviting their continuing participation as partners. The longer we wait to invest in raising the grade, the more it will cost us, and future generations.