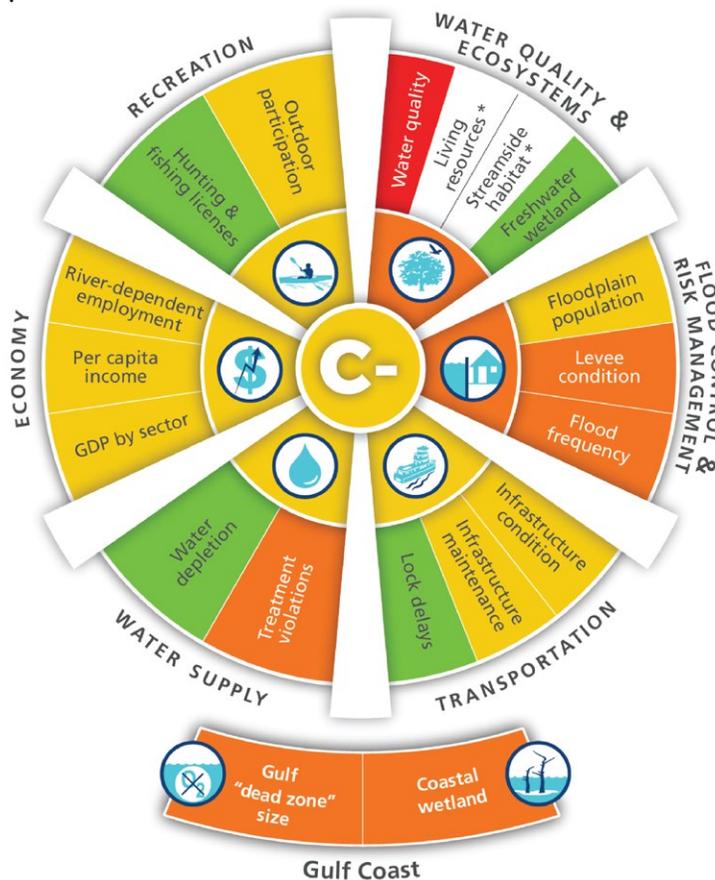


# Year in Review

As 2021 comes to an end, we want to take a moment to thank you for your partnership with America's Watershed Initiative. It has been an exciting year as we wrapped up our latest Mississippi River Watershed Report Card, listened and learned from you about a next generation report card and initiated and contributed to several new projects described below. Your many contributions made a difference in our work. Thank you, and we look forward to more opportunities for collaboration in 2022.

## REPORT CARD RELEASE

AWI, in partnership with the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES), has released its second Mississippi River Watershed Report Card, resulting in a grade of C- for the entire watershed. AWI's last Report Card in 2015 resulted in a grade of D+. The Report Card coalesces data from multiple sectors and basins, facilitating an examination of the status and trends in the watershed. Despite some modest improvements, the watershed remains threatened by more frequent and extreme flooding, aging infrastructure, nutrient runoff, and continued urbanization and agricultural intensification.

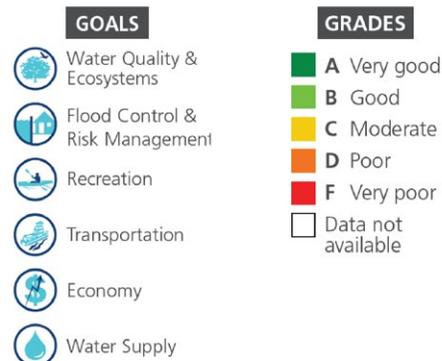


## REPORT CARD REVISIONING

In order to examine the content and effectiveness of the report card, AWI and UMCES provided a survey and webinars to partners. Nearly 100 partners provided written and verbal feedback that will help AWI's Mississippi River Watershed Report Card evolve into an even more sophisticated platform to address shared solutions across the watershed.

Three key ideas emerged from these conversations:

- 1. Incorporate indicators that drive grade improvement:** Move from status indicators to those that show where we want to go and connect indicators to actions to prevent losing ground (grades C-F) and move toward gaining ground (Grades A-B).
- 2. Recognize regional needs and data:** Acknowledge and capture critical regional differences between and within basins.
- 3. Recognize the interaction between goals and indicators:** Focus on a systems approach that recognizes the interrelationship between goals, for example, how flooding affects water quality.



\* Data from the US EPA Rivers and Streams Assessment to update scores for Living Resources and Streamside Habitat (sampling years 2013-2014) became available after publication, we are now working to incorporate 2018-2019 data and will provide updated analysis in 2022.



## A NEW VISION FOR INTEGRATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

AWI's Executive Team has met with key federal agencies to discuss the fact that the Mississippi River Watershed is the only large U.S. watershed without dedicated funding and an integrated, watershed-based approach to address urgent and interrelated challenges.

At present, watershed actions are divided among agencies. AWI seeks to build a diverse, robust collaboration across sectors. This approach considers ecological, social, and economic factors we think would lead to shared priorities and amplification of on-the-ground action across the watershed.

AWI has proposed an Executive Order to bring together stakeholders from across the basin to articulate sub- and whole basin needs to determine how to achieve our basin-wide goals.

## MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN MONITORING PROJECT

As cities, companies, and citizen groups consider solutions to the basin's most pressing problems, defensible scientific information from a consistent, integrated, and transparent biological and hydrological monitoring system is critical. While portions of the basin have these systems in place, most do not. Without information that can protect communities and inform industry and government, it will be impossible to detect changes due to climate variability, ensure stable navigation and commerce, and create and sustain a healthy Mississippi River.

AWI is working with federal, state, and NGO partners to develop a collaborative plan for a consistent, integrated, and transparent monitoring system across the Mississippi River watershed to provide standardized information on present and future flooding conditions, flood risk, water quality and sediments, and ecosystem health. The system could also address forecasting, flood inundation mapping, sediment transport and deposition, community resilience, conservation, restoration, and navigation across the entire watershed.

## ELEVATING BASIN CHAMPIONS THROUGH COMMUNICATIONS

In early 2022, the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA) and the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program will release multi-decade reports on water quality and other ecological and hydrological trends in the Upper Basin. These publications provide the opportunity to share this information to maximize impact and galvanize stakeholder action. AWI will work in concert with these partners to develop a communications campaign to highlight this important data, show how good data can be used to make good decisions, and generate on-the-ground actions.

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## • NEW BOARD MEMBERS •

Four new board members joined our incredible team this year:

**Debra Calhoun** (Ohio River Basin, Paducah, KY) is Senior Vice President of Waterways Council, Inc. (WCI). She has worked with WCI since its inception in 2003. She also serves as Secretary of the National Waterways Foundation.

**Charlie Hess** (Lower Mississippi River Basin, New Orleans, LA) is the President of Infrastructure and Coastal Restoration for Brown and Root. The majority of Charlie's career was spent with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, culminating in his role as Chief of Operations/Civil Works at Corps Headquarters.

**Dr. Barb Kleiss** (Lower Mississippi River Basin, Clinton, MS) is a Research Professor and Coordinator for Tulane University's River Science and Engineering Program. Barb has served as the Chief of the U.S. Geological Survey's National Water Quality Assessment Program's Mississippi Embayment project, and the Director of both the Louisiana Coastal Area Science and Technology program and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Mississippi River Geomorphology and Potamology program.

**Frank Morton** (Lower Mississippi River Basin, Pearl River, LA), AWI's former interim Executive Director, has had a decades-long career in the inland marine industry. From 1990 to 2012, he served as founder and president of Turn Services. Frank has also served in a variety of leadership roles with the American Waterways Operators, including a term as Chairperson.

**TO GIVE OR LEARN MORE**, please visit [americaswatershed.org](https://americaswatershed.org) or contact:

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