

Briefing on America's Watershed Initiative to the Stewardship Action Team

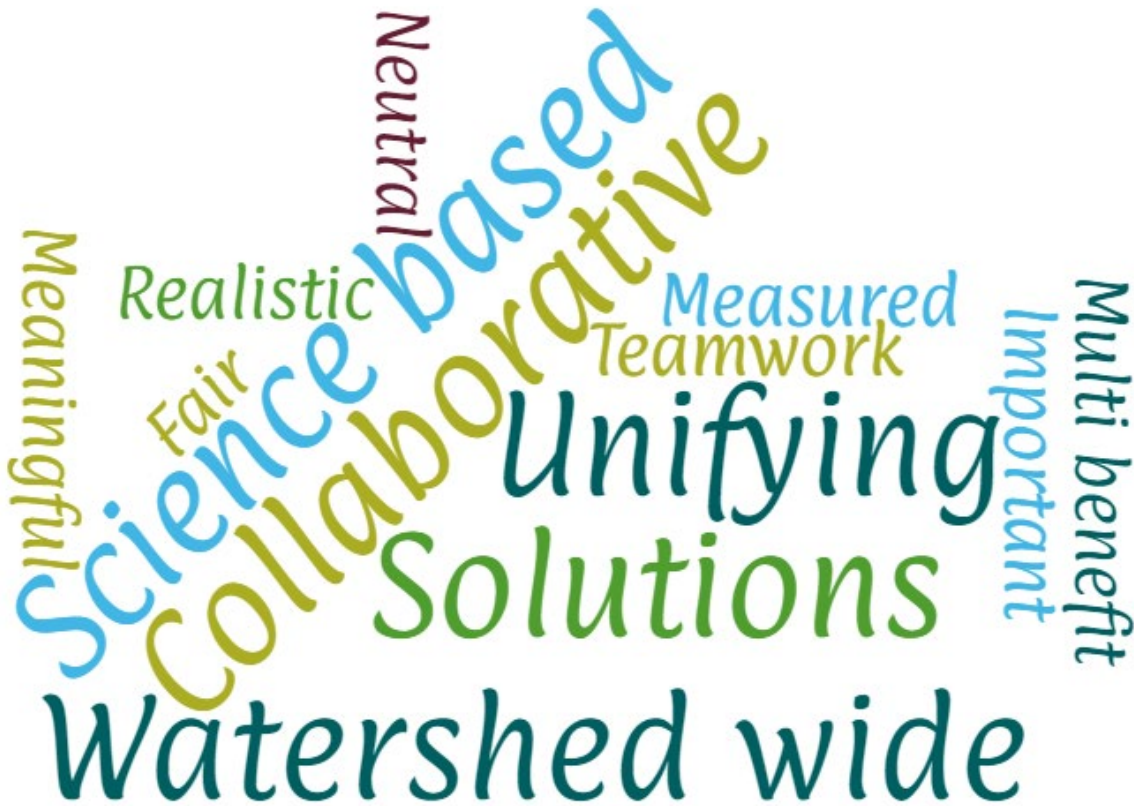
April 16, 2024

AMERICA'S WATERSHED INITIATIVE



- Established in 2009 under umbrella of The Nature Conservancy with an independent Steering Committee
- Incorporated as a non-profit organization in 2018
- First full-time Executive Director in 2020

AMERICA'S WATERSHED INITIATIVE



- Only non-profit organization representing all major sectors and the entire Mississippi River watershed
- Champion sound science to inform decision making
- Foster dialogue, and build coalitions to promote solutions



2020 MISSISSIPPI RIVER WATERSHED

REPORT CARD



2020 GRADE



WATER QUALITY
& ECOSYSTEMS



FLOOD CONTROL &
RISK MANAGEMENT



RECREATION



TRANSPORTATION



ECONOMY



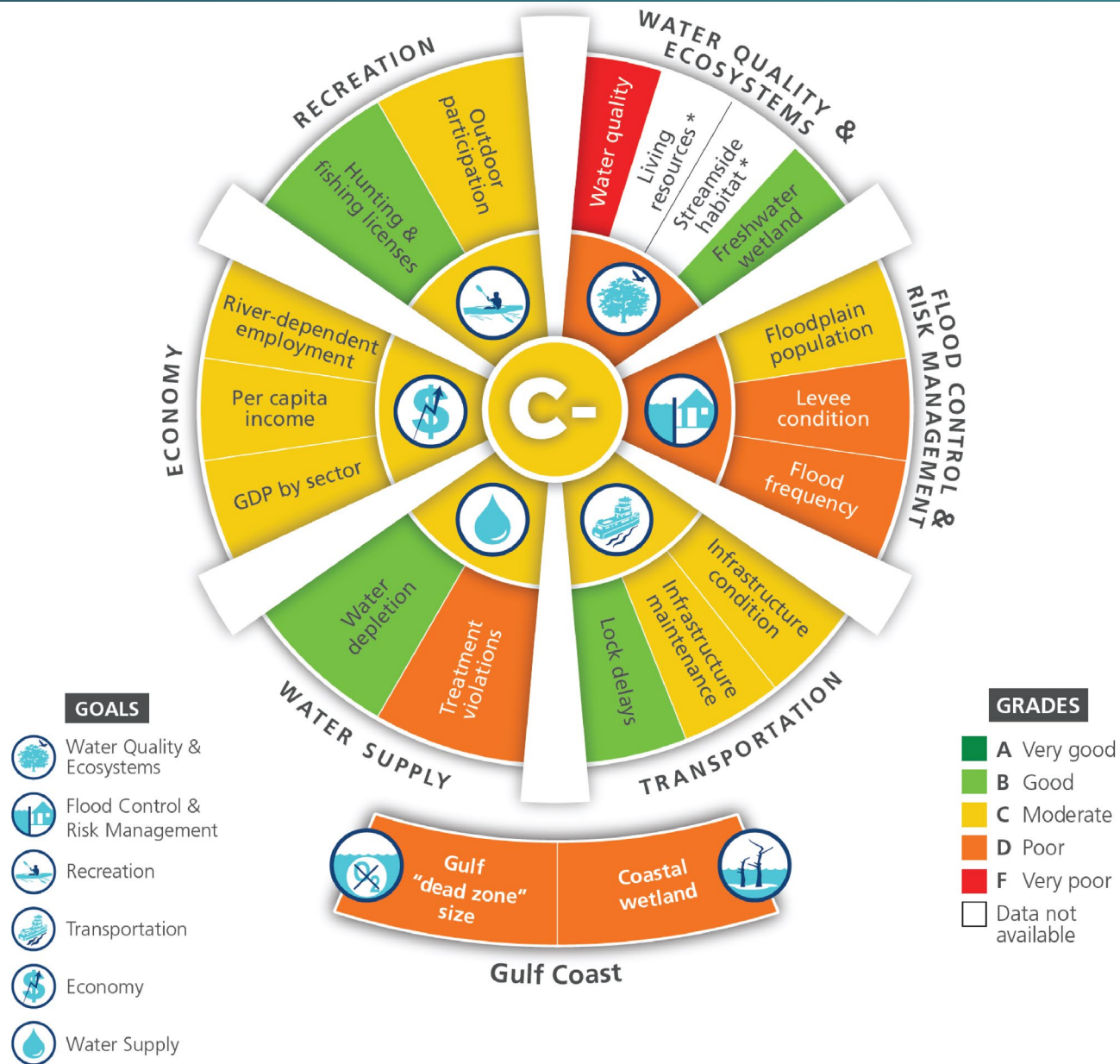
WATER SUPPLY



Uniting people, land and water across 31 states
America's
WATERSHED initiative >>

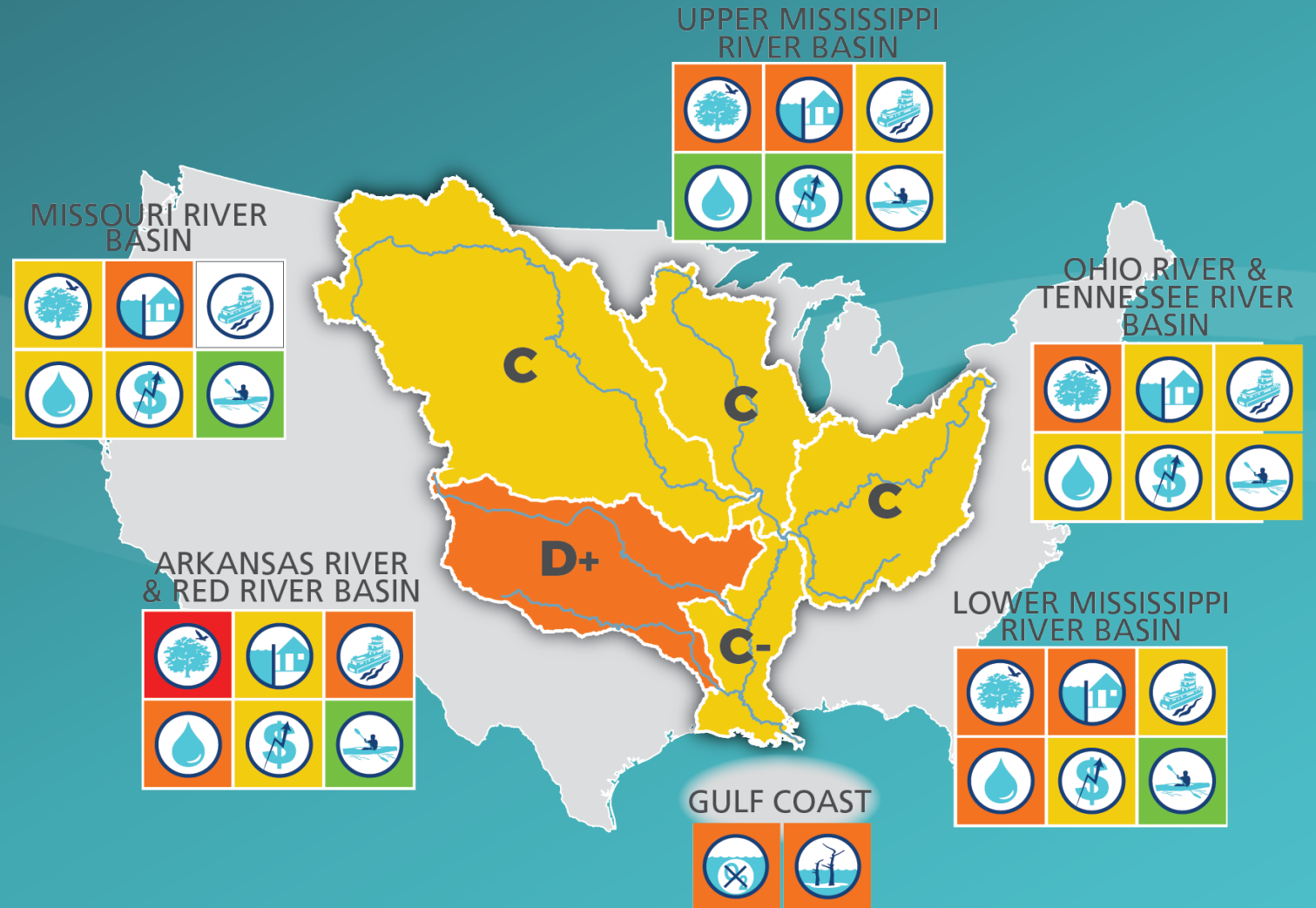
MISSISSIPPI RIVER WATERSHED REPORT CARD

REPORT CARD RESULTS

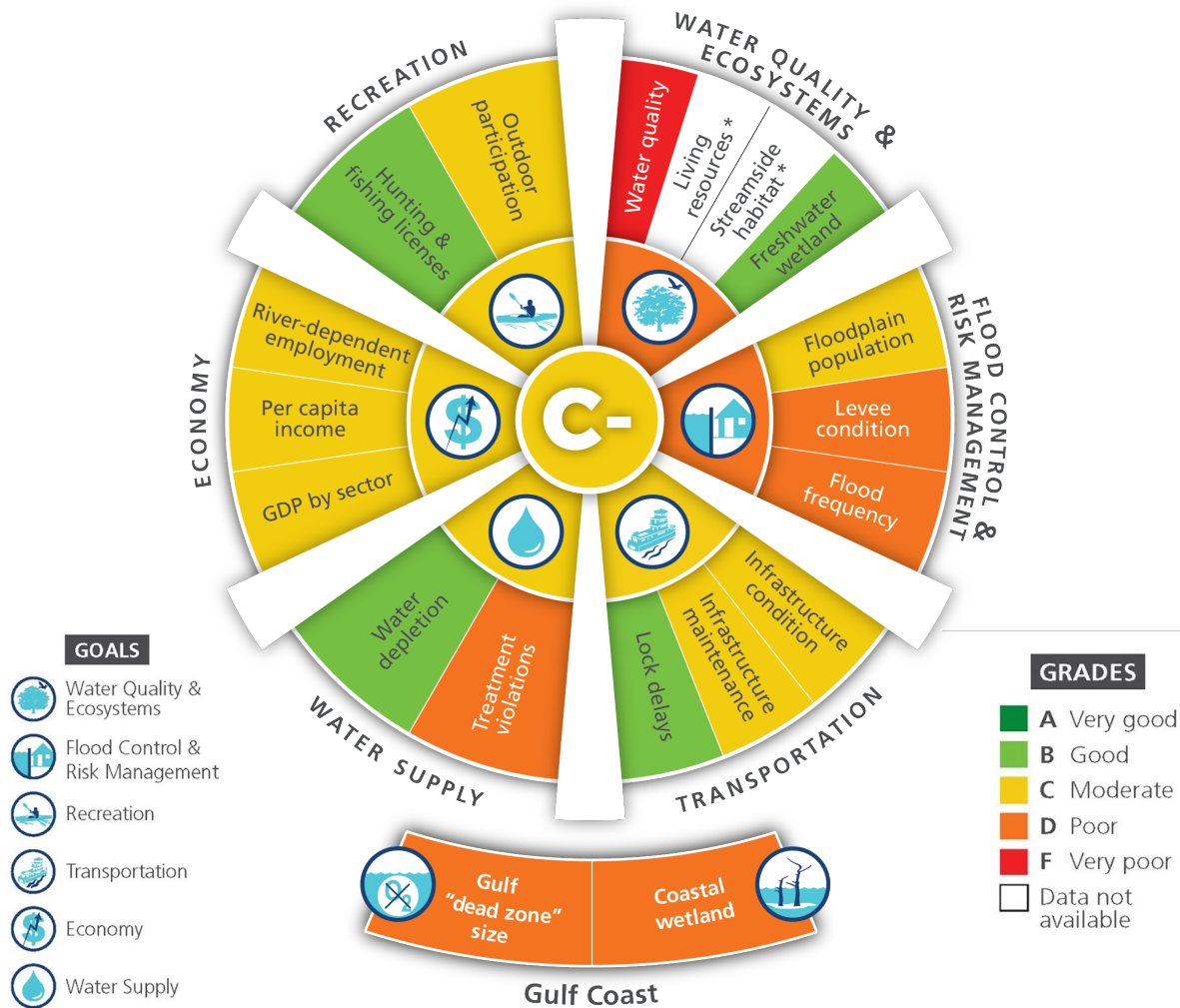


* Data from the US EPA Rivers and Streams Assessment to update scores for Living Resources and Streamside Habitat is not yet publicly available.

LOOKING ACROSS THE ENTIRE WATERSHED AND AT ALL SECTORS



OVERALL MISSISSIPPI RIVER



C-

C- IS A SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT FROM 2015

- Poor Water Quality Scores
- Living Resources and Streamside Habitat data are missing
- Flood Frequency indicator is new

NAVIGATION

Goal:

- Serve as the nation's most valuable river transportation corridor

Indicators

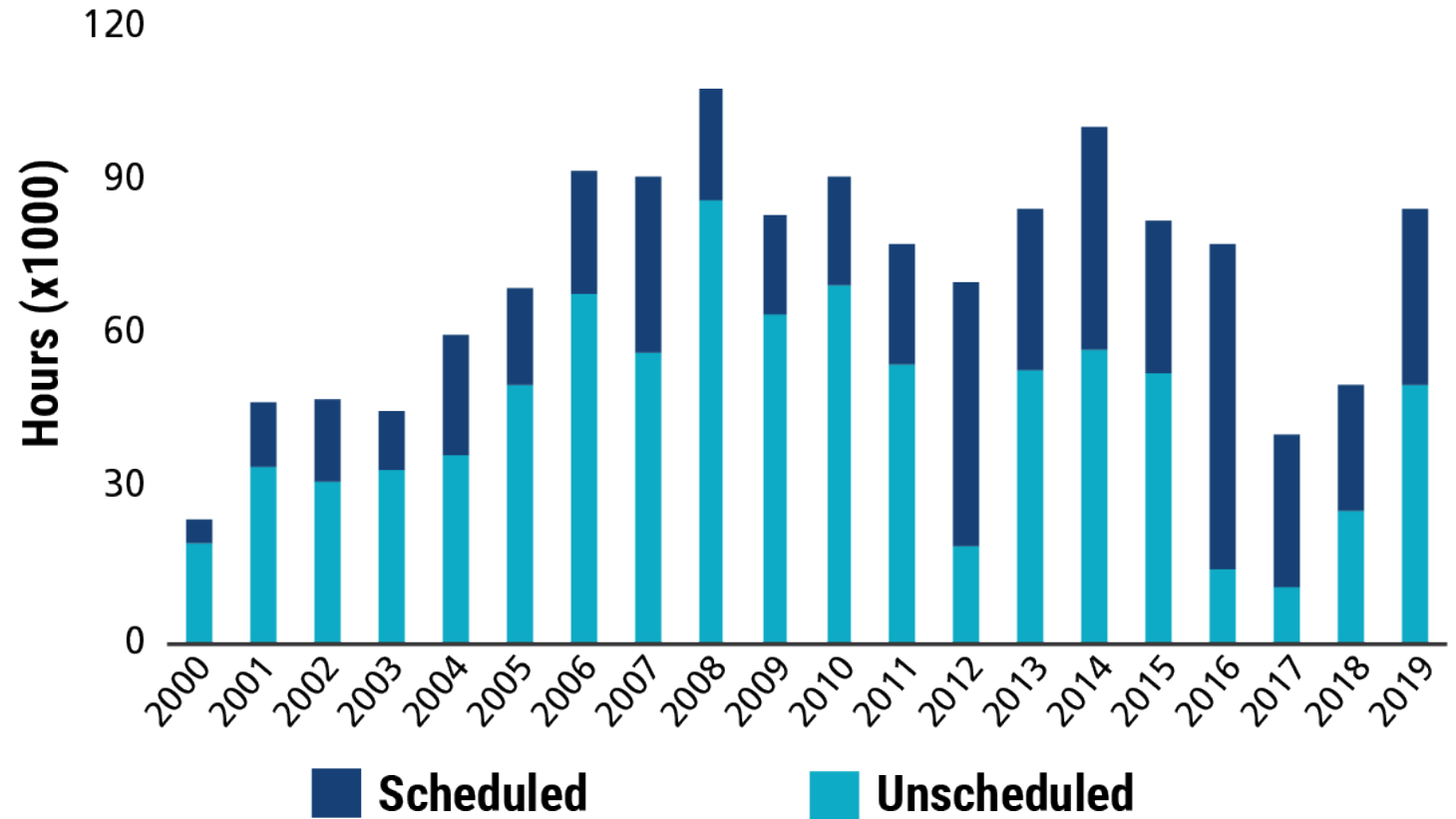
- Infrastructure Condition
- Infrastructure Maintenance
- Lock Delays



LOCK DELAYS HAVE BEEN DECREASING

Mississippi River Lock Delays

- Unscheduled delays generally declining (2019 increase from severe flooding).
- Key construction projects completed.
- Funding improvements for infrastructure and dredging.
- Infrastructure age is over life expectancy.



Data: USACE-LPMS

FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

Goal:

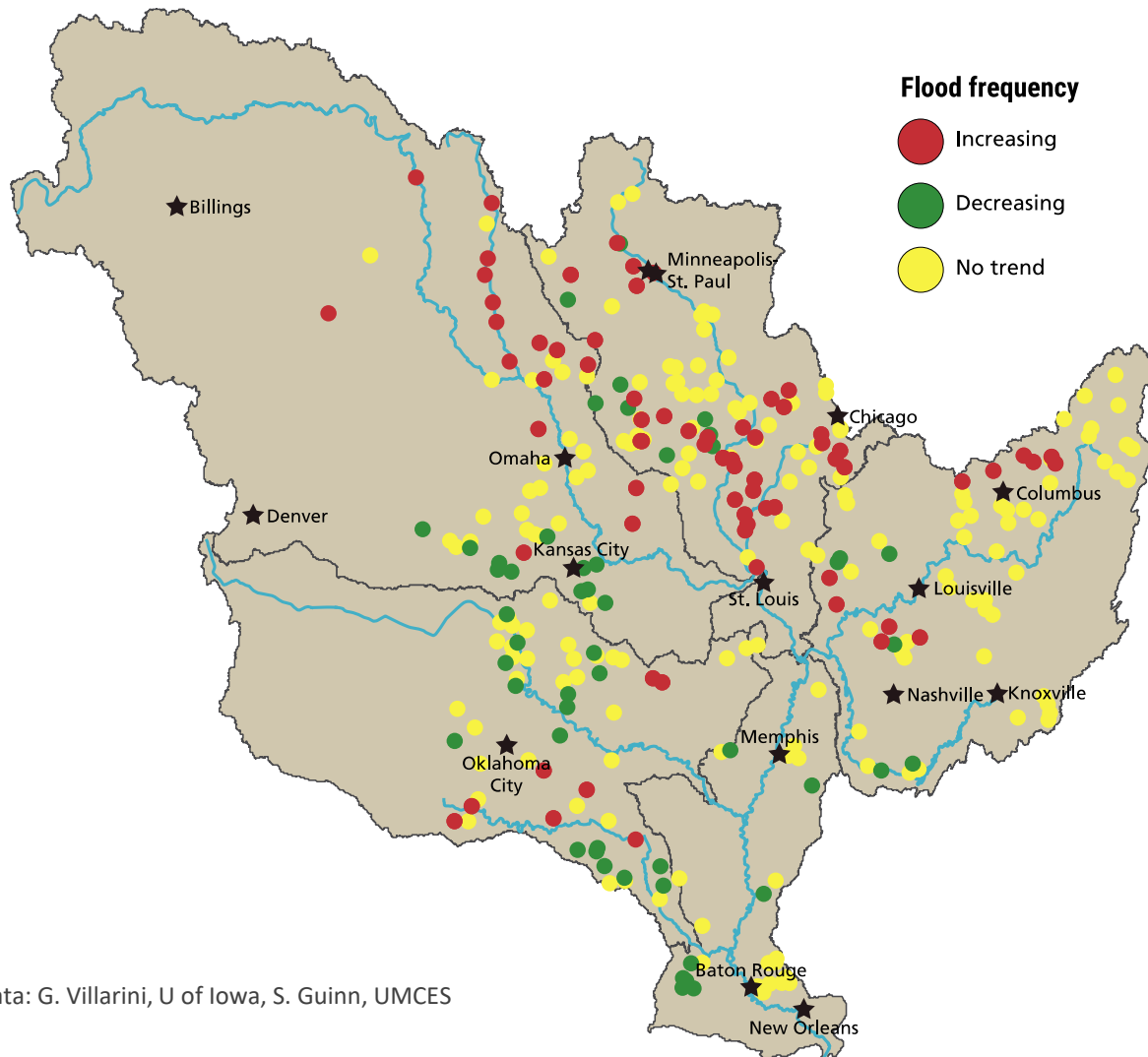
- Provide reliable flood control and risk reduction

Indicators:

- Floodplain Population
- Levee Condition
- Flood Frequency



FREQUENCY OF FLOODING IS INCREASING



Data: G. Villarini, U of Iowa, S. Guinn, UMCES

- Frequency of Flooding is increasing in most areas, especially in tributaries
- Bonnet Carré Spillway opened 6 times in the last decade

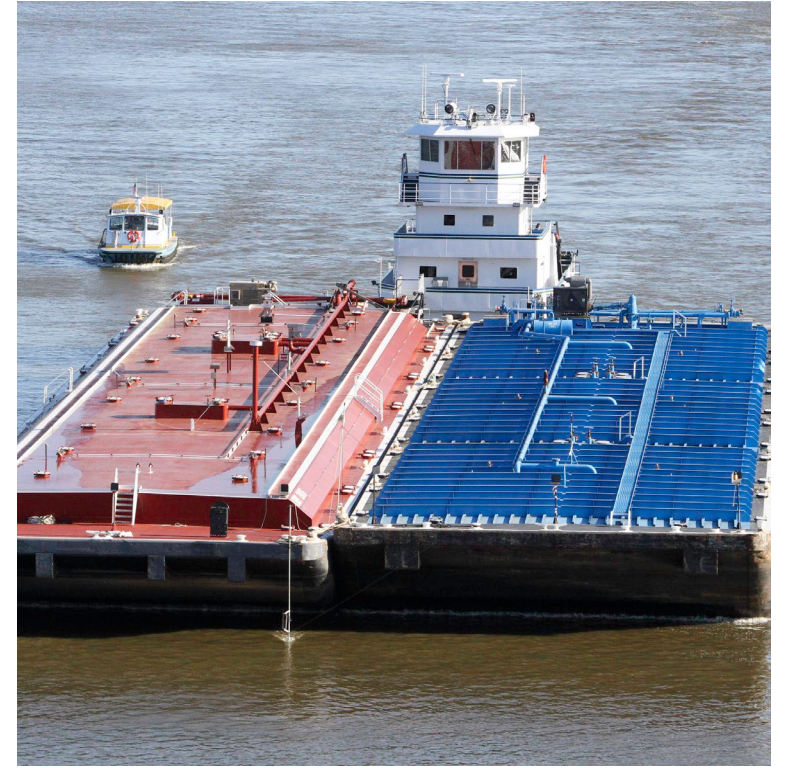
Need for a Mississippi River Watershed Partnership



WHAT IS OUR END GOAL?

- Develop a structure for the Mississippi River basin designed to coordinate and maximize resources and tools towards a targeted set of outcomes
- We are open to different pathways to achieve this structure; it could come through a formalized public, private partnership or via legislation
- To address the enormity of the challenge, we have outlined a two-year action plan





POTENTIAL AREAS FOR COLLABORATION

- Improve water quality
- Mitigate impacts of climate change
- Improve inland transportation and infrastructure
- Expand access to actionable information
- Engage social justice communities

WHAT EXISTING PROGRAMS COULD BE MODELS?

- The size and scope of the basin necessitates a unique structure
- We propose an organizational structure that acknowledges the differences in the five major subbasins
- Within the basin, the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA) is a great example



WHAT WILL BE BETTER WITH THIS COLLABORATION IN PLACE?

- Ability to assess and achieve multiple benefits from programs and projects
- More efficient and effective federal spending
- Better data informed decision making through filling data gaps, increasing accessibility of this information and improved continuity across data sets



PROGRESS TO DATE

- Summer 2022 - Meetings with USDA, USACE, White House
- Nov 2022 - Multi-agency meeting hosted by USDA Under Secretary Bonnie and USACE ASA Michael Connor and WH Director of Rural Engagement Will McIntee
- Jan 2023 to Present – multiple engagements with 8 federal agencies, multi-state alliances, NGOs, Corporations and Trade Organizations





FEDERAL ENGAGEMENT

Council on Environmental Quality

Department of Agriculture

- Natural Resources Conservation Service

Department of Commerce

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association

Department of Homeland Security

- Federal Emergency Management Agency

Department of Housing and Urban Development

Department of the Interior

- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Geological Survey
- Bureau of Reclamation

Department of Transportation

Environmental Protection Agency

US Army Corps of Engineers



NEXT STEPS: MARCH-JUNE

Data Gathering

- Compile comprehensive list of Federal Programs that address key issue areas
- Assess cost of these programs
- Identify gaps

Goal and Actions

- In partnership with multi-state alliance, host basinwide convening to identify outcome-based goals for issue areas and initial action steps



NEXT STEPS: JULY - SEPTEMBER

Organizational Structure

- Examine potential organizational structures
- Develop structural models
- Vet with federal , state, industry, NGO and academic partners

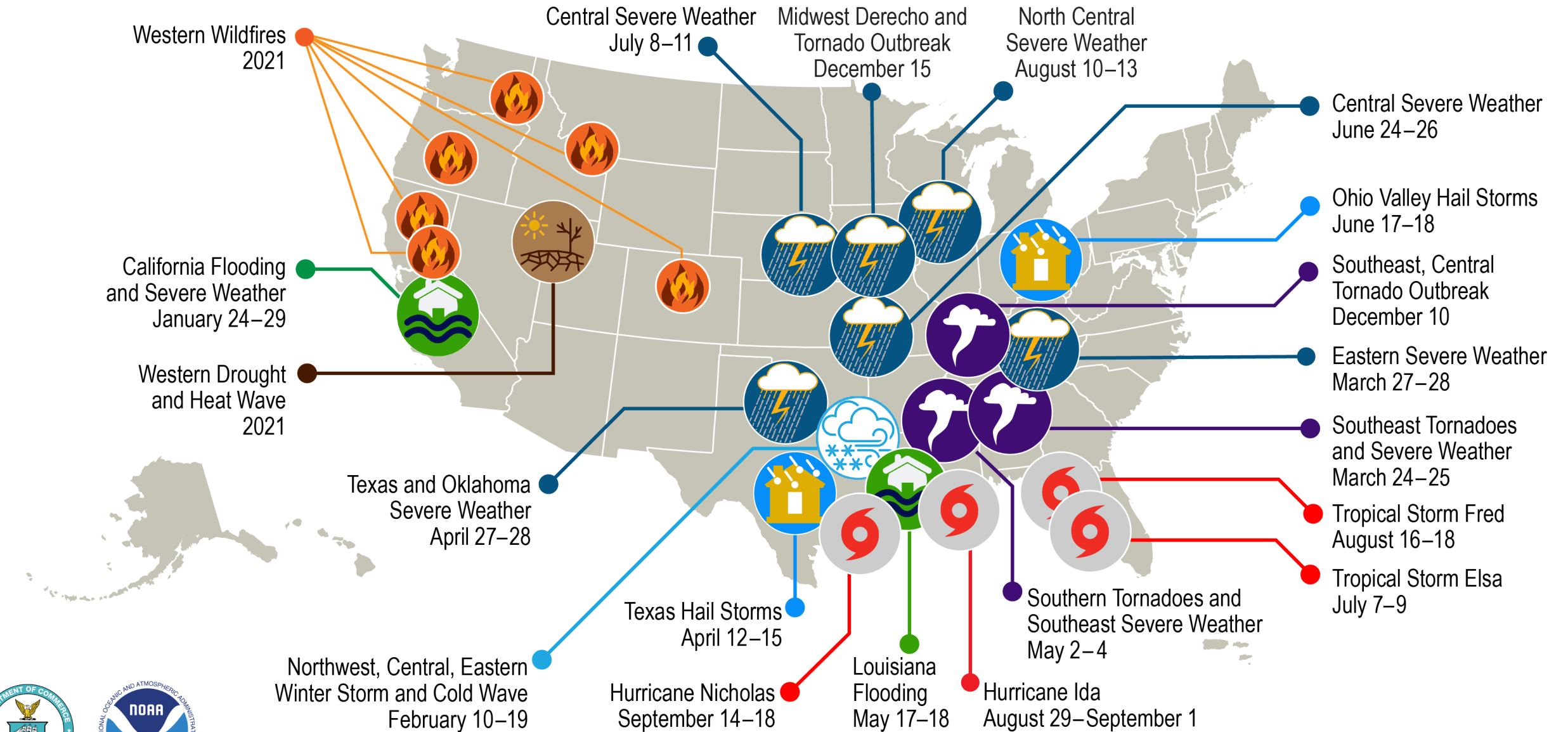
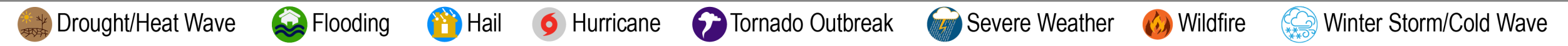
Codify Findings

- Document system design and implementation recommendations, submit to Task Force for review and approval
- Identify specific mechanisms for collaboration and integration of and enhancement of existing programs
- Communicate with partners and interested parties

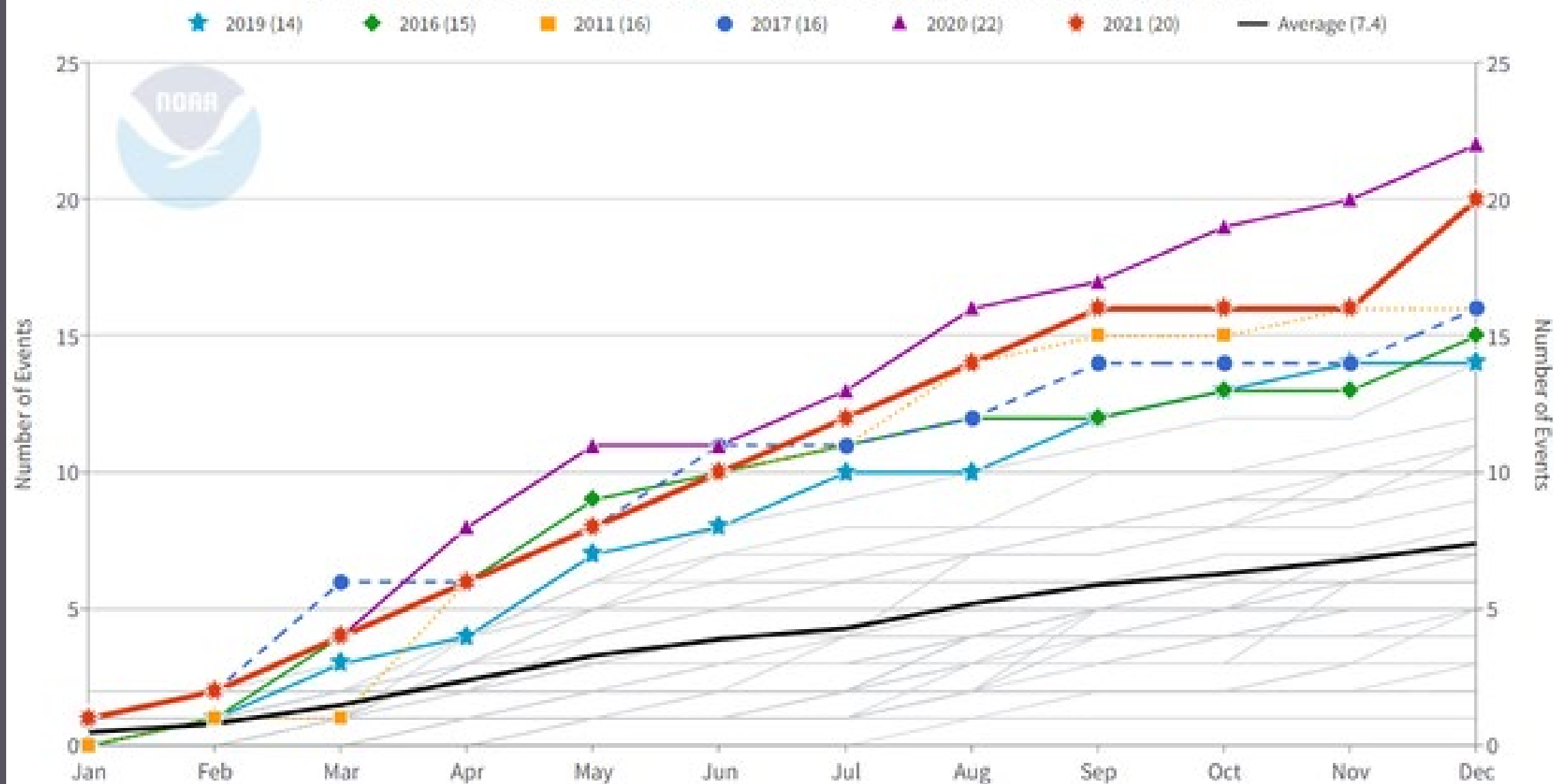


NATURE- BASED SOLUTIONS TO WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY

U.S. 2021 Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters



This map denotes the approximate location for each of the **20 separate billion-dollar weather and climate disasters** that impacted the United States in 2021



WE WILL INCREASE RESILIENCY TO CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH:

- Advance enabling conditions that will increase usage of Nature-based Solutions (NBS)
- Elevate resilience literacy
- Build alignment for shared metrics to track progress



ADVANCE ENABLING CONDITIONS THAT WILL INCREASE USAGE OF NATURE- BASED SOLUTIONS

- Gap analysis of current state and federal programs in the basin that address NBS
- Analysis of levers that limit and/or enhance usage of NBS
- Determine where ARPA, IIJA or private funding could be allocated to NBS
- Document learning from private and public implementation of NBS in priority areas



BUILD ALIGNMENT FOR SHARED METRICS TO TRACK PROGRESS

- Convene federal, state and academic scientists to evaluate potential metrics
- Identify data gaps, and work with research institutions to elevate these for long-term funding
- Use Mississippi River Report Card to socialize these metrics for adoption



THANK YOU