

Engaging Steering Committees

Fishers & Farmers
Partnership for the
Upper Mississippi
River Basin

fishersandfarmers.org

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iowa Department of Natural Resources Iowa Soybean Association Illinois Department of Natural Resources Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Minnesota Corn Growers Association Missouri Department of Conservation Missouri Agribusiness Association Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources* Wallace Pasture Project –Wisconsin* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Rivers National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium Natural Resources Conservation Service The Nature Conservancy Trout Unlimited Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee U.S. Geological Survey U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service U.S. Forest Service
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Fishers & Farmers is made up of both natural resources and agricultural groups in the 5 states that make up the Upper Mississippi River Basin. Active agricultural organizations include Iowa Soybean Association, MN Corn Growers, and Wallace Pasture Project (Grazing Org WI). This is a picture of our Steering Committee touring one of their projects in Seven Mile Creek Watershed, MN. We have a Science Team, Communications Team, and Projects Team.



Our Mission: “to support locally-led projects that add value to farms while restoring aquatic habitat and native fish populations.” We have found out that throughout the Basin we are more successful in putting farmers in the lead and working with farmer-led committees. Most of our projects have a farm-led committee or are in the process of initiating one. Our focal watersheds are shown here on the map. Instead of using a “fix it and forget it approach,” once we select a watershed, we stay working there for many years. Like Aldo Leopold’s approach he used in the Nation’s First Watershed project, Coon Creek, WI, we believe in looking at the watershed as a whole ecosystem, not just pieces. We are not only interested in creating great fish habitat with better water quality, but we also want to improve the farms and communities around the fish habitat. Projects include best management practices such as cover crops, strip-till, no-till, managed grazing, oxbow and floodplain restoration, streambank and riparian corridor protection, water and sediment control basins, ravine stabilization, buffers, fish passage, managed drainage, bioreactors, wetland and prairie restoration and many others.



The Steering Committee works together to decide which fish habitat projects, both instream and terrestrial, receive funding. Members of the Steering Committee are creative movers and shakers that bring many talents along with them and find that they can accomplish much more together than they can in their individual organizations. Fishers & Farmers works as a catalyst to bring in more flexible funding, technical assistance, and watershed leaders.

Engaging Steering Committees

1. Two face to face meetings per year – spend time to create relationships. Summer meetings tour projects & talk to farmers/landowners.
2. Rotate meetings around states , hold meetings in “border cities.” Dubuque, IA close to 3-4 states
3. Ask “Why are you here or want to join?” Have them fill out a petition to join
4. Tap into member strengths: business, marketing, GIS, strings to pull, funding
5. Think about what services you need on your Steering Committee, approach people with those skills (people want to feel useful/needed).
6. Involvement: our SC meets with farmers/landowners, attends field days, tours, workshops. They want to DO something other than just attend a meeting.
7. Our SC meets with our partners and bring proposed projects to the table.
8. Natural resources & Ag people from the same state come to meetings together (sometimes go to other meetings together too).
9. Share lots of communication through email – sometimes just little news clips or accomplishments. Sometimes we select a topic and have side conversations.
10. Work to tear down silos –work across agency programs, fish, water quality, streams
11. Don’t wait for projects to come in, create your own (Watershed Leaders Network)
12. Resiliency: SC members bring new members before they retire. Many times these are people with diverse skills.

Since we became a Partnership in 2010, here are some things we’ve learned about how to engage our Steering Committee.



The Watershed Leaders Network was initiated in 2015. We now have over 70 people that attend and many are from our farmer-led committees we work with on projects. This network grew out of our Steering Committee, and they believe the WLN will help change land use practices.