

Upper Mississippi River Environmental Management Program (EMP)

Audubon supports full funding in FY06 for the Upper Mississippi River EMP at \$33.5 million, as recommended in the President's budget request. We are in complete agreement with the President's assessment of the EMP as a national priority. Each year, over 400 bald eagles and nearly 30,000 wild tundra swans, along with hundreds of thousands of other birds use the Upper Mississippi River. Full funding will help achieve major steps toward a healthier Upper Mississippi River System.

To date, the EMP is a leading example of the type of collaborative process the federal government can use to develop a balanced and sustainable river plan. The mission of the EMP is to "ensure the coordinated development and enhancement of the Upper Mississippi River System," which stretches from Minneapolis, Minnesota to Cairo, Illinois. Since the program started in 1986 the EMP has completed 41 habitat rehabilitation (HREP) projects improving critical habitat on 55,000 acres. Six long-term monitoring stations have been established on the river. This preeminent large river science program has made major strides in determining the status and trends of habitat and species change, resulting in meaningful data used daily by resource managers. In addition, data is instrumental in setting the stage for a major ecosystem restoration program for the next fifty years. The efforts of the EMP contribute to the management of navigation and flood control. The EMP enhances and rehabilitates riverine wetland areas up and down the river stimulating transportation uses, attracting visitors, adding recreational opportunities, and bolstering local economies. The EMP helps preserve the natural treasure of the upper Mississippi River by managing river navigation and flood control while promoting recreation on the river. These measures help people enjoy the river now while ensuring its preservation for future generations. For more than a decade the EMP program has been struggling financially to meet a proven need for habitat restoration and long term monitoring on the river. Full funding of this program can make a real difference in reversing 150 years of habitat degradation.