

Mississippi Headwaters Board

2013—2015 Biennial Report



Message From the Chair

The Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB) has developed this report for the Minnesota legislature to fulfill the statutory requirement to assess the effectiveness of the MHB Comprehensive Plan to protect the natural, cultural, scenic, scientific, and recreational values of the first 400 miles of the Mississippi River.

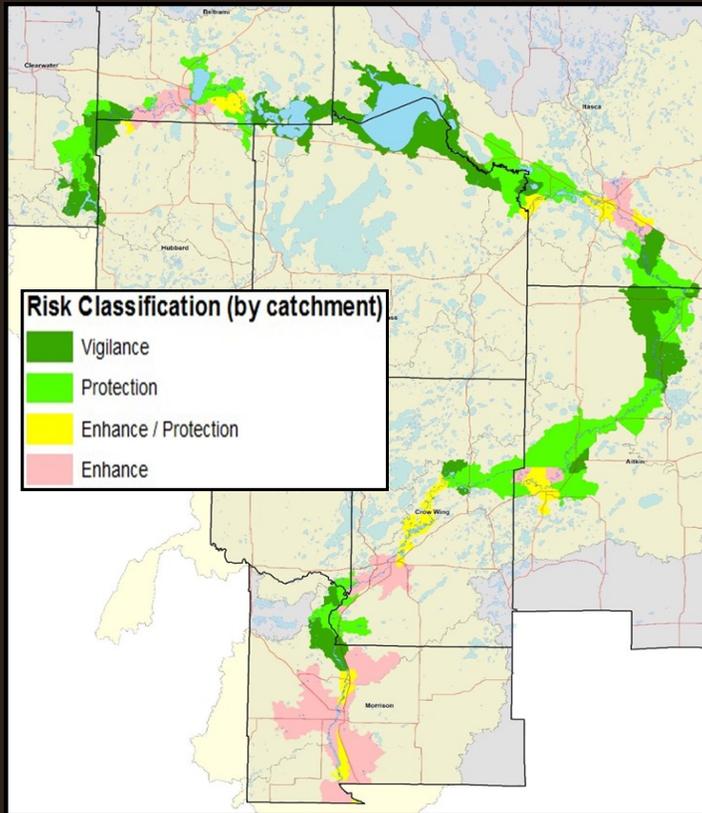
During this 2013—2015 biennium, the MHB accomplished many projects for the benefit of the people and river. Some of these accomplishments were to hire a new Executive Director; develop a standard operating procedure for cities that wish to annex land; complete a grant to identify risk to water quality in the catchments; and monitor streams and rivers to assess the pollutant loads that drain to the Mississippi. Preserving and protecting the values of this river are important to this nation and especially to the people of Minnesota. This is a report on the Mississippi Headwaters Board progress toward meeting this goal.

Dean Newland, Chairman

The Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB) was organized in 1980 as an alternative to federal control of the first 400 miles of the Mississippi River. The counties of Clearwater, Hubbard, Beltrami, Cass, Itasca, Aitkin, Crow Wing and Morrison entered into a joint powers agreement under Minnesota Statutes 103F.361-378 to preserve and protect the shore lands of the Mississippi River and seven Headwater lakes. The counties adopted a shore land zoning ordinance for land and recreation use within the corridor as a means to carry out its mandate of protection.

The Mississippi River is North America's largest River and also a working river from Lake Itasca to New Orleans. In the headwaters, the Mississippi is a corridor for highways and rail traffic; important for fish and wildlife and the accompanying recreational seeker. It is an important water source for northern Minnesota industry and communities and those far beyond the first 400 miles of the river.

Biennium Accomplishments— 2012 Clean Water Fund Grant Completed



A risk assessment was completed on the 400-mile stretch of the Mississippi River from its Headwaters at Lake Itasca to Morrison County by the Mississippi Headwaters Board in 2014 (see picture on left).

The Headwaters project gathered existing water quality data to determine river water quality over time. Electronically available land use information was gathered and coordinated among all 8 counties along the river. Together, this information helped identify two main types of areas along the river: 1) areas of concern where water quality is showing degradation, and 2) areas that are critical to long-term water quality protection.

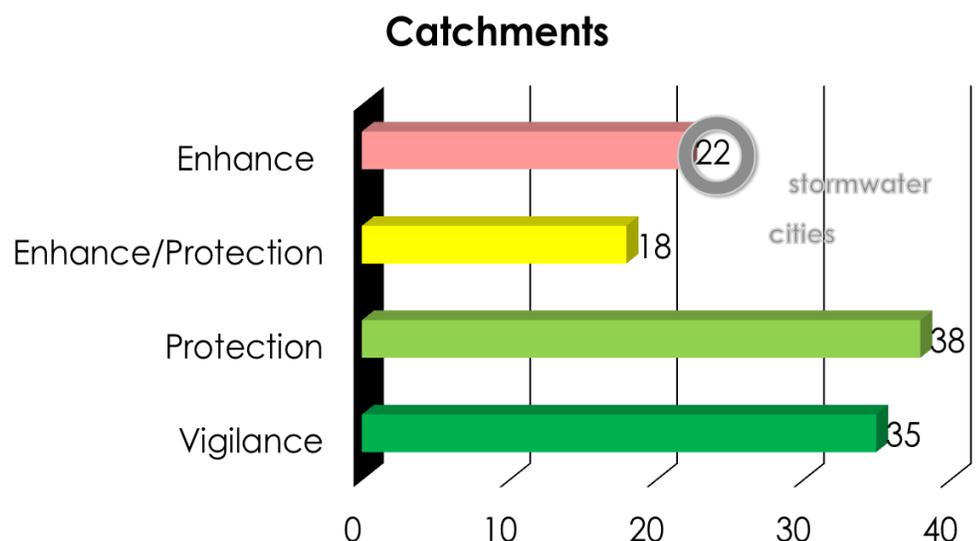
The MHB, working in cooperation with the member counties is beginning implementation plans and strategies for the Mississippi River and incorporating them into the individual County Comprehensive Local Water Plans. These recommendations would be specific strategies, often crossing county boundaries for implementation.

With this type of priority information in hand, the MHB and the member counties will coordinate funding strategies to prioritize and target effective implementation of conservation practices that take advantage of future Clean Water Land and Legacy funding opportunities as well as provide greater coordination among the counties on planning and applying existing land use authority.

The MHB Strategy

Through completion of the Clean Water Legacy grant, it was identified that a strategy needed to be developed to address the rural land and the urban stormwater runoff. The MHB chose to work on the “Enhance” catchments where the cities are located by partnering with HDR Engineering to fund a stormwater retrofit analysis. With over 90% of the cities in the MHB’s jurisdictional area participating, a plan was created to address stormwater pollution prevention practices, and develop a schedule toward implementation. For rural land outside the municipal boundaries the MHB chose to work on those catchments in the “Enhance/Protection” and “Protection” areas by applying for a habitat grant to protect these valuable treasures. Vigilance catchments would be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis. This helped reduce the risk of water quality degradation and protect habitat on the entire Mississippi River.

MHB Strategy

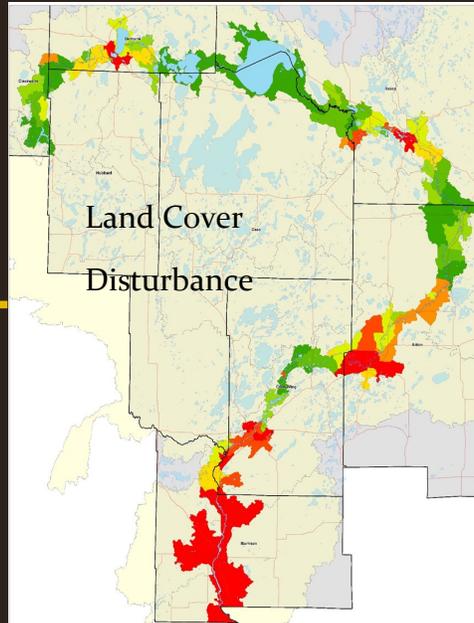
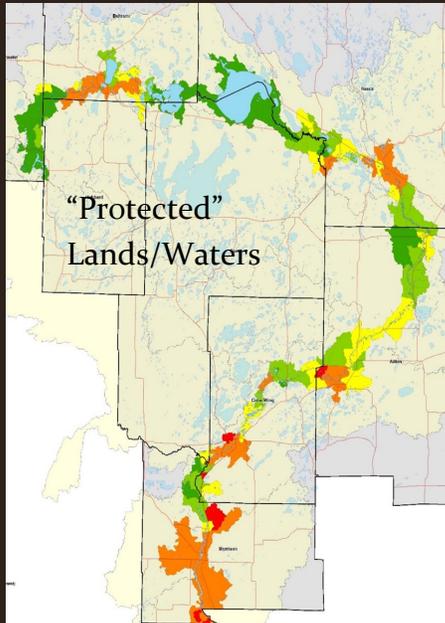


Biennium Accomplishment

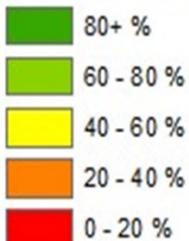
Collaborative Conferences Create Consistency

With a grant received from the Initiative Foundation and the Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB) held conferences that helped explain their sub-watershed prioritization methodology. The conferences were held in 2013 and 2014 in which County Commissioners, the legislative delegation of the MHB, City representatives, agency personnel from Dept. of Natural Resources, Board of Water and Soil Resources, MN Pollution Control Agency, and local resource professionals in the Mississippi Headwaters Region attended. They learned about the newly created sub-watershed prioritization methodology to analyze risk; an urban storm water analysis model that would be implemented throughout the year; and listened to a speech delivered by DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr. Commissioner Landwehr challenged the MHB to “identify and implement boldly” to protect the natural infrastructure in the area. This led to the MHB applying for a Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Grant in 2015. These conferences also provided a consistent message from the field to the capitol about how partners can work together on regional issues with a consistent strategy, and was responsible for this methodology being implemented into the 8 County Comprehensive Water Plans. Below is an example of how the risk classification methodology was developed.

Risk Classification =



% Protected (by catchment)



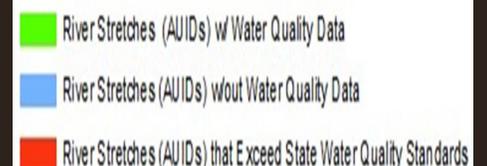
% Disturbed Land Cover

Disturbed = Developed, Cultivated, Pasture, Grassland



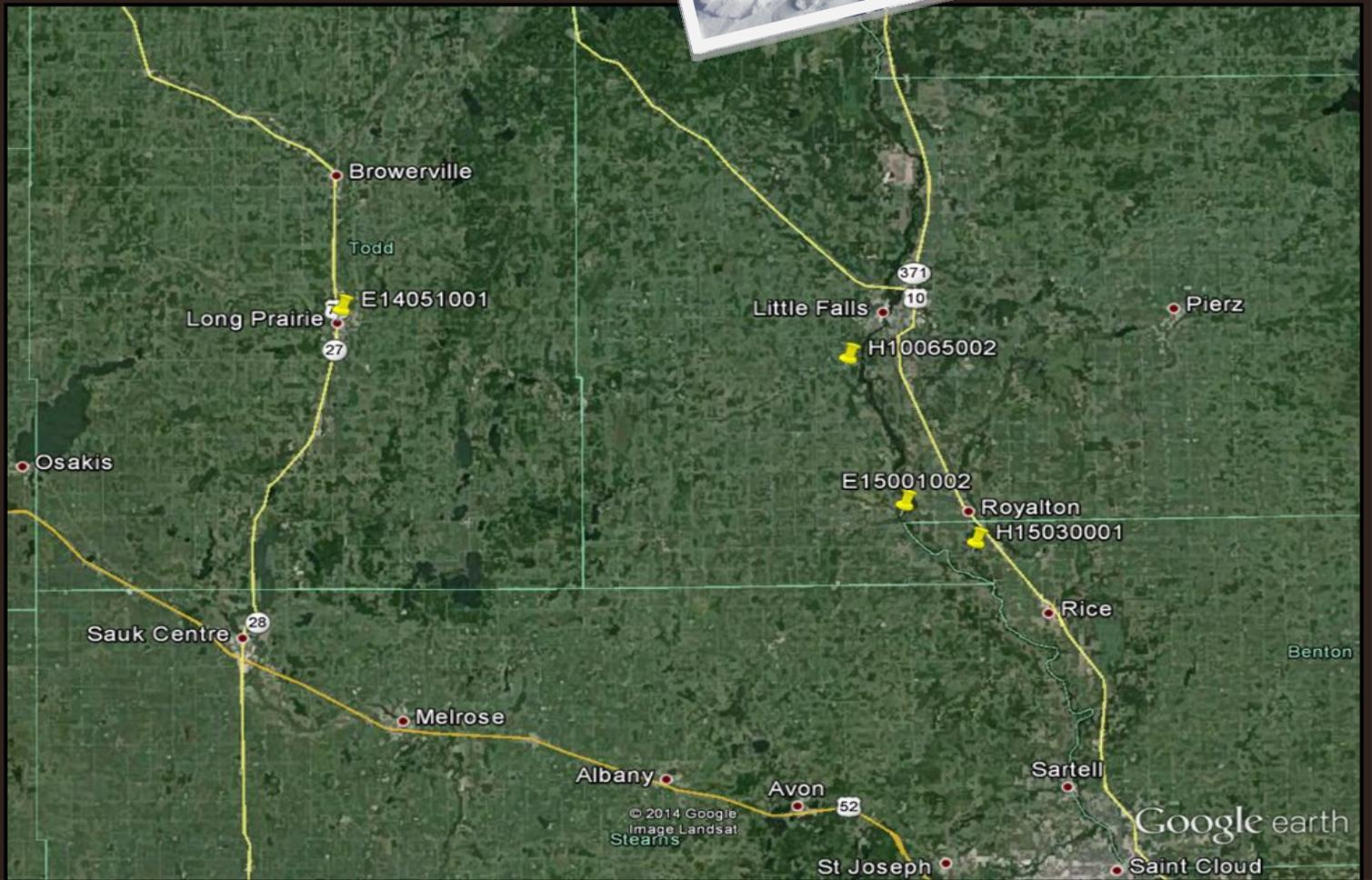
River Stretches (AUIDs)

Water Quality Data Summary from 2003-2012





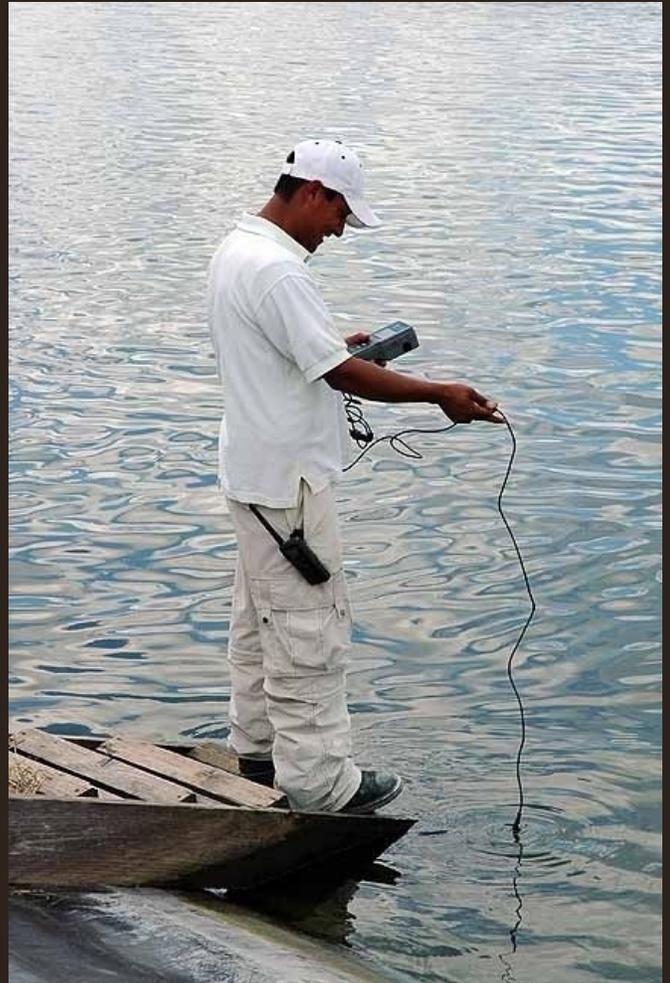
Map of sites being monitored by MHB.



Biennium Accomplishment

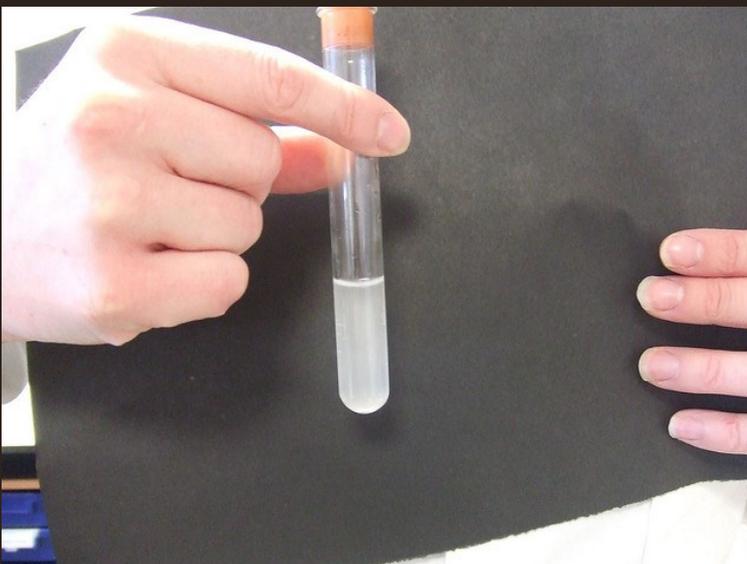
Water Monitoring Partnership Formed

2015 brought about an opportunity to work with other partners. Monitoring the health of Minnesota's rivers is vital in determining, maintaining, and improving the health of the rivers for the environment and public use. The Mississippi Headwaters Board partnered with Widseth Smith Nolting and the MN Pollution Control Agency to sample for various pollutants that may be present in the Mississippi River and the streams that drain into it. The scope of this project is to collect surface water chemistry samples at designated sampling locations during appropriate time periods and at appropriate frequencies for 1 year beginning February 2015. The sites chosen were the Long Prairie River at Long Prairie; the Swan River near Sobieski, Mississippi River below Royalton, and the Platte River near Royalton. Although this was a pilot project, the data will be used to look for potential sources of pollutants in or entering into the Mississippi River. There is the possibility for this grant could continue and expand its scope over the next 20 years, which would provide the MHB with some long term data on pollutants that may hinder the Mississippi river's water quality.

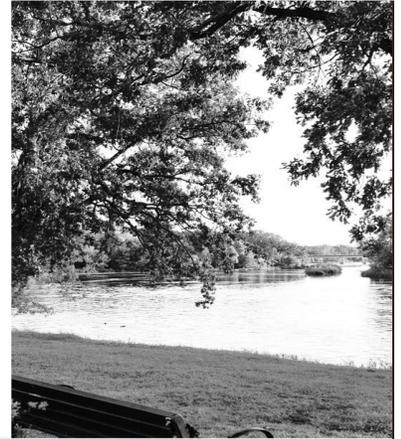
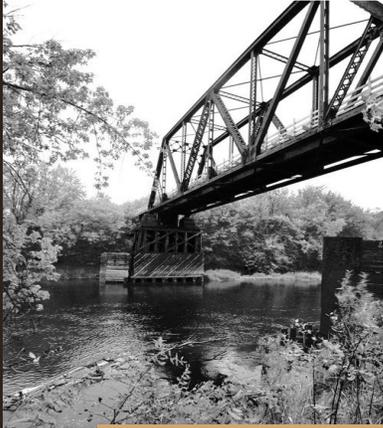


“Monitoring the quality of our rivers and streams requires cooperation between government agencies and our local partners.”

*-Jim MacArthur
MPCA Hydrologist*



Future Goals!



Moving the Needle Toward Protection



Campaign Document Produced

Where there is no vision, the people perish. These words apply to any organization. That is why in 2015, the Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB) created a campaign document to cast the vision and context for our future. Three **threats** were recognized:

- 1. Natural Resource Vulnerability-** Seeing the need for natural resource infrastructure protection for the recreational and natural values of the river; the MHB developed a 20 year strategy to leverage state funds and protect the habitat and water quality of the Mississippi for the enjoyment of future generations of Minnesotans.
- 2. Stormwater Pollution-** The need for cities to minimize storm water pollution was evident, so the MHB is working to develop storm water retrofit plans for the cities on the main stem of the Mississippi that will help city officials make informed decisions on pollution prevention practices. Grants will be applied for to help implement these plans.
- 3. Aquatic Invasive Species Degradation-** The MHB chose to work with member counties to secure funds for a multi-county AIS awareness media campaign which will provide a consistent message throughout North Central Minnesota about the social responsibility of keeping our lakes free of aquatic pests and plants.

Biennium Activity Assessment

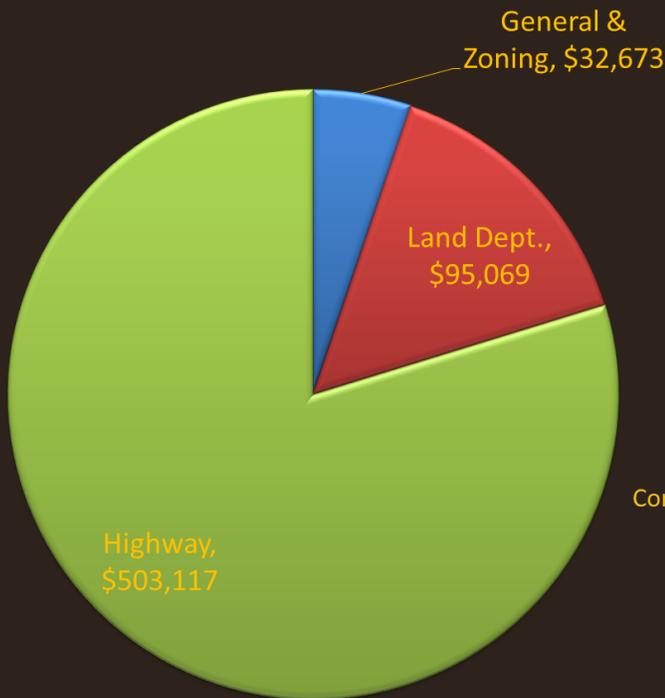
STATEMENT OF REVENUES

REVENUES	'13-'14	'14-'15
State of MN Grant Approp.	\$83,540.20	\$125,615.83
Other Appropriations (County)	\$12,000	\$12,000
Other Grants/Income -	\$45,796.65	\$65,614.76
TOTAL	\$141,336.85	\$203,230.59

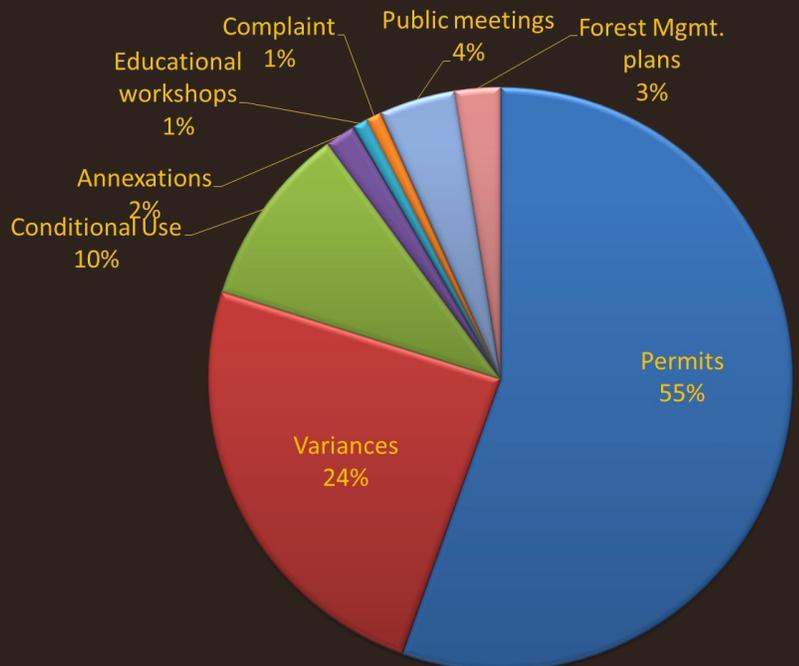
STATEMENT OF EXPENSES

OPERATION EXPENSES	'13-'14	'14-'15
Salaries (inc. benefits)	\$85,200.48	\$102,597.02
Per Diem	\$4,850.00	\$3,550.00
Professional Services	\$19,662.11	\$71,940.82
Mileage	\$8,925.26	\$9,017.71
Office Operations	\$8,507.97	\$3,327.34
TOTAL	\$127,145.82	\$190,432.89

2013 – 2015 In-Kind Contributions



Corridor Actions





Context & Connecting

Mississippi Headwaters Board Mission

Context and Connecting

The MHB is working to coordinate and collaborate with state agency, local professionals, and key stakeholders to protect the first 400 miles of the Mississippi River.

Coordinating the watershed work with the Upper Mississippi organizations outside the corridor to protect the River.

Providing context and connection strategies for organizations in the Upper Mississippi River Basin.



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