



## **MICRA AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) COMMITTEE**

### **CHARTER**

*Approved January 22, 2026*

### **Background and History**

#### MICRA

Twenty-eight state natural resources management agencies with fisheries management jurisdiction in the Mississippi River Basin (Basin) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) formally agreed in 1990 to work together for the development of cooperative fisheries research and management programs to assess the Basin's fishery resources and habitat requirements to protect, maintain, and enhance interjurisdictional fisheries in the basin. The Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA) was formed in 1991 as a state, federal, and tribal partnership whose Mission is to improve the conservation, management, development and utilization of interjurisdictional fishery resources (both recreational and commercial) in the Basin through improved coordination and communication among the responsible management entities.

#### AIS

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are defined in Executive Order 13112, as "alien [non-native] species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health." They are nonindigenous or non-native species that threaten the diversity or abundance of native species and the ecological stability of infested waters. AIS also negatively impacts the human use of aquatic resources including water supply and delivery systems for drinking water, hydropower, agriculture, aquaculture, other commercial purposes, and outdoor recreational activities dependent on such waters. AIS are a national threat to public health and well-being, healthy and balanced ecosystems, and related economies.

The MICRA member agencies developed 'A Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Mississippi River Basin Fisheries' (Joint Strategic Plan) in 2022 that identifies AIS as one of four complex issues that must be addressed to comprehensively manage self-sustaining interjurisdictional fishery resources in the Basin. The agencies concluded that successful prevention, management, and control of AIS in the Basin will require unprecedented coordination and collaboration among state and federal agencies.

#### ANS Task Force

Congress established the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANS Task Force) with the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act (NANPCA) in 1990, as amended by the National Invasive Species Act (NISA) in 1996, to coordinate governmental efforts related to AIS in the U.S. with those of the private sector and other North American interests. The ANS Task Force is co-chaired by the USFWS and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and consists of 13 Federal agency representatives and 13 ex-officio representatives. These member agencies work in conjunction with issue specific committees

and a national network of six regional advisory panels to coordinate efforts among local stakeholders to develop regional strategies and actions for achieving the goals of the ANS Task Force. The ANS Task Force and its six regional advisory panels are governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) regarding their establishment, operation, and termination.

### MRBP

In 2001, MICRA was invited to serve as one of the 13 ex-officio members of the ANS Task Force and to host the Mississippi River Basin Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species (MRBP), one of the six regional advisory panels to the ANS Task Force. An organizational strategy was developed by MICRA and approved by the ANS Task Force in 2002, and an MRBP organizational meeting was held in July 2003. Regional advisory panel membership, as defined by NANPCA, must be composed of representatives from federal, state and local agencies, and private environmental and commercial interests. The MRBP also includes membership for representatives of academia, and subject matter experts from the general public may serve as at-large members.

The MRBP is charged with addressing the responsibilities set forth for regional panels as outlined in NANPCA and achieving the goals identified in the ANS Task Force Strategic Plan. The MRBP provides policy recommendations to the ANS Task Force to address “gaps in statutory authority, emerging policy issues, and to better define future ANS Task Force roles and responsibilities for managing ANS”.<sup>1</sup> The MRBP is not able to lobby or communicate directly with Congress, nor can the MRBP develop advocacy materials to address MICRA’s AIS policy priorities. As an advisory committee that provides recommendations to the federal agency members of the ANS Task Force, the MRBP is a FACA chartered organization whose establishment, operation, and termination are at the will of the Administration and Department of Interior (DOI) and are governed by FACA rules. Among other requirements, FACA requires that MRBP meetings are announced in advance and open to the public.

### MICRA AIS Committee

AIS were an early concern of MICRA member agencies for the long-term management of healthy, self-sustaining interjurisdictional fisheries and aquatic resources within the Basin. MICRA formed an Exotic Species Committee in 1996 and renamed the committee the Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Committee in 1997. Due to overlap in committee membership with the MRBP, MICRA voted at the end of 2003 to discontinue the partnership’s ANS Committee, and to coordinate its AIS activities through the MRBP. MICRA developed ‘*An Action Plan to Minimize Ecological Impacts of Aquatic Invasive Species in the Mississippi River Basin*’ in 2010 to guide near-term coordinated efforts to prevent introductions and to contain and control populations of priority AIS established in the Basin. Soon after, MICRA identified priority needs for coordinated AIS prevention and control measures in the Basin including several policy priorities that were outside the scope and authority of the MRBP. Positions and actions taken by the MRBP and MICRA regarding various AIS issues may not always parallel one another.

Limiting the MICRA partnership’s AIS activities to the MRBP had additional unforeseen consequences. In January 2017, DOI instated a “strategic pause” prohibiting all the Department’s FACA chartered organizations from meeting until cleared by DOI, including the ANS Task Force and Regional Panels. As a result, the July 2017 MRBP coordination meeting had to be cancelled and the MICRA member agencies lacked an alternative forum to convene and coordinate on AIS issues of importance within the Basin. The MICRA Executive Board quickly approved a budget to sponsor a Mississippi River Basin AIS coordinators

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<sup>1</sup> Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.

<https://www.fws.gov/media/aquatic-nuisance-species-task-force-strategic-plan-2020-2025>

meeting for the member agencies in lieu of the cancelled MRBP meeting.

In 2018, the MICRA Executive Board approved a recommendation to re-establish a MICRA AIS Committee with distinct roles and responsibilities to work on AIS issues of interest to the Basin that are beyond the MRBP's scope and authority as a federal advisory committee to the ANS Task Force. The MICRA AIS Committee was formally established as a standing technical committee whose responsibilities and direction are provided by the MICRA Executive Board. The AIS Committee is charged with coordinating on AIS issues of interest to the Basin and addressing AIS priorities identified by MICRA, acting on direction provided by the Executive Board, and reporting on progress and emerging AIS issues to the MICRA Executive Board.

## **MICRA AIS Committee Purpose and Responsibilities**

### Mission Statement/Purpose

The MICRA AIS Committee's purpose is basin-wide coordination and collaboration among the MICRA member agencies to improve interjurisdictional management and control of shared AIS priorities throughout the Basin in support of MICRA's Joint Strategic Plan and policy needs.

### Responsibilities

To achieve the committee's purpose, committee members will adopt a consensus-based approach for decision-making as described in MICRA's Joint Strategic Plan. The committee is responsible for

- Addressing MICRA's AIS priorities and coordinating on AIS issues of interest to the member agencies.
- Developing recommended near-term actions and long-term strategies to address AIS needs identified in MICRA's Joint Strategic Plan.
- Promoting consistent and effective policy intended to influence governmental decisions to prevent and control AIS in the Basin.
- Identifying policy priorities in areas such as legislation, prevention, management, research, regulatory and budgetary needs to advance AIS prevention and control throughout the Basin.
- Developing policy recommendations for consideration by the MICRA Executive Board as potential guidance to be provided to member agencies, state and federal decision-making bodies, and other entities responsible for coordinating AIS program activities in the Basin.

### Relationship to MRBP

Representation on both the MICRA AIS Committee and the MRBP is anticipated to be the same for most state and federal agencies to streamline communication and coordination between the two groups. The MICRA AIS Committee will regularly coordinate with the MRBP Executive Committee to avoid direct overlap and duplication of effort when addressing AIS issues. To enhance this coordination, the AIS Committee Chair may serve in a dual role as the 'MICRA Liaison', a non-voting position on the MRBP Executive Committee with the responsibility of serving as the MRBP's representative to the MICRA Executive Board (Figure 1).

### Committee Meetings

The AIS Committee will strive to meet in-person at least once annually to conduct business and address MICRA's AIS priorities; however, meetings may be conducted virtually/remotely if required by extenuating circumstances. AIS Committee members may meet in conjunction with MRBP meetings to reduce member

time commitments and travel costs; however, AIS Committee meetings shall be conducted separately from MRBP meetings. AIS Committee meetings will be open to all MICRA member agencies. Participation from individuals that do not belong to MICRA member agencies is by invitation or AIS Committee chair approval.

## **Committee Structure**

### Steering Committee

The AIS Committee will use a Steering Committee to handle day-to-day operations, plan committee meetings and activities, and coordinate membership communications. Voting AIS Committee members from each MICRA sub-basin will be responsible for identifying one representative from among the respective Voting and Alternate Voting AIS Committee members to serve on the Steering Committee, for a minimum of four and a maximum of six members with the intent of having the entire basin represented (Figure 2). A single representative may be selected to represent both the Ohio River and Tennessee-Cumberland sub-basins and to represent both the Arkansas-Red-White Rivers and Lower Mississippi River sub-basins. Steering Committee member terms are not set and may vary depending on the interest and ability of a member to serve. Each Steering Committee member should make known well in advance their desire to step down so that a smooth transition can be made to another member. Steering Committee members are expected to be active and represent their respective sub-basin. Every two years the Steering Committee members will be asked to confirm their continued active participation. Sub-basin members may identify a new representative for the Steering Committee as needed.

Steering Committee members will meet as needed to conduct AIS Committee business and ensure progress addressing MICRA's AIS Priorities. Steering Committee members assist the AIS Committee Chair in the fulfillment of the responsibilities identified below. Steering Committee members are responsible for coordinating information exchange with their respective sub-basin members and coordinating responses from sub-basin members as needed. In the event that a sub-basin does not have representation on the Steering Committee, the AIS Committee Chair will coordinate information exchange with and responses from the sub-basin members.

### Committee Chair

One Steering Committee member will be elected by the Steering Committee membership to serve a 2-year term as AIS Committee Chair that begins January 1 of odd number years. When possible, the AIS Committee Chair should also serve as the appointing agency's Voting Member or Alternate Voting Member on the MRBP for greatest awareness and coordination between the two committees. The AIS Committee Chair may serve in a dual role as the MRBP's MICRA Liaison, a non-voting MRBP Executive Committee position.

The AIS Committee Chair is responsible for working with the Steering Committee to carry out day-to-day work and additional duties as needed to ensure AIS Committee productivity addressing MICRA's AIS priorities. In addition, the AIS Committee Chair assumes or delegates the following responsibilities:

- Schedules and presides at Steering Committee and AIS Committee meetings; prepares meeting agendas with assistance from Steering Committee members; and compiles and distributes meeting notes.
- Plans and facilitates completion of AIS Committee business with committee membership, steering committee, and ad hoc committees as needed.
- Serves as MICRA's official voting representative on the ANS Task Force and attends ANS Task Force

meetings to represent MICRA.

- Attends MICRA Executive Board meetings to provide summaries of AIS Committee and ANS Task Force meetings; requests operational funds for the MICRA AIS Committee as needed; reports on AIS Committee's progress addressing MICRA's AIS priorities; and briefs the Executive Board on the AIS Committee's recommended additions or changes to MICRA's AIS priorities.
- Maintains permanent administrative records of AIS Committee membership, meetings, activities, and publications.
- Coordinates with AIS Committee members to assist MICRA with AIS outreach and website content.

#### Ad Hoc Subcommittees

Ad hoc subcommittees may be temporarily formed to address specific issues or committee needs and to develop draft documents (e.g., project proposals, position statements, policy recommendations) for the full committee membership's review and consideration.

### **MICRA AIS Committee Membership**

MICRA AIS Committee membership consists of appointed voting members, alternate voting members, and federal observers as described in more detail below. Each MICRA Delegate from a state agency may appoint one representative and an alternate to the MICRA AIS Committee. Additional agency staff may participate on the committee as non-voting members but will not have voting privileges. MICRA member federal agencies may have one or more representatives serve as a Federal Observer on the AIS committee. All agency representatives should have an appropriate knowledge of their agency's AIS challenges and priorities, authorities and policies, and financial resources capabilities and limitations.

#### Voting Members

Twenty-eight state agencies participate in the MICRA partnership and each MICRA Delegate may designate a single Voting Member to serve on the AIS Committee and represent the agency. Voting Members are anticipated to be the agency's AIS coordinator (or equivalent position); however, each MICRA Delegate is responsible for appointing an appropriate agency representative. Voting members are eligible to serve as the AIS Committee Chair or as a Steering Committee member.

#### Alternate Voting Members

Each state agency with a designated Voting Member may also appoint an Alternate Voting Member to serve on the AIS Committee as the agency's voting representative in the absence of the agency's designated Voting Member. Although Alternate Voting Members are not eligible to vote when the designated Voting Member is present, they may fully participate in AIS Committee meetings, discussions, and activities and are eligible to serve as the AIS Committee Chair or as a Steering Committee member. In cases where an agency's designated and alternate voting members are not available to participate in an AIS Committee meeting, activity, or vote, a proxy may be authorized to vote on behalf of the agency by providing advance written notification to the AIS Committee Chair and MICRA Coordinator.

#### Non-Voting Members

State agencies that have an appointed Voting Member or Alternate Voting Member to represent the agency may have additional staff participate in the AIS Committee as Non-Voting Members. Non-Voting Members receive regular AIS Committee correspondence and may fully participate in committee meetings,

discussions, and activities. Unless designated as a proxy for an absent Voting Member or Alternate Voting Member, Non-Voting Members are not authorized to vote in committee on behalf of their agency. Non-Voting MICRA Members are not eligible to serve as an AIS Committee Chair or as a Steering Committee member.

### Federal Observers

Federal agencies do not have appointed Voting or Non-Voting Member representation on the AIS Committee. However, each MICRA member federal agency may have one or more representatives serve as a Federal Observer on the AIS committee. Federal Observers receive regular AIS Committee correspondence and may fully participate in committee meetings, discussions, and activities to the extent permissible within federal regulations and agency policy. Federal Observers may not vote on AIS Committee business and are not eligible to serve as the AIS Committee Chair or as a Steering Committee member.

### Terms of Service

Voting Members, Alternate Voting Members, and Non-Voting Members shall serve until (1) a date specified by the appointing entity, (2) the member is removed by or resigns from the appointing entity, or (3) the member resigns from the AIS Committee. Upon the resignation or the end of an appointment of a committee member, the entity represented by that member may be requested to provide a replacement. AIS Committee members do not have term limits. Federal Observers do not have defined terms of service, since they do not have a voting role and therefore do not need to be officially designated by their agency.

### Membership Responsibilities

Individuals serving on the MICRA AIS Committee should be well versed on issues related to AIS prevention and control and have a sincere interest in being an active member. Once appointed, each AIS Committee member assumes the following responsibilities:

- Regularly attend and actively participate in AIS Committee meetings, discussions, and activities to represent their appointing organization. If unable to participate, Voting Members should arrange for participation by the designated Alternate Voting Member or a proxy whenever possible.
- Contribute to the development of collaborative, interjurisdictional actions and recommendations that are not constrained by their respective agency's current policies or fiscal limitations.
- Communicate their appointing agency's AIS management and policy initiatives.
- Report back to their appointing agency on AIS Committee recommended actions, key issues, and committee initiatives under discussion.
- Serve as an ambassador for the AIS Committee, acknowledging the mission and promoting the work of the committee with their organization.
- Strive to improve the AIS Committee's ability to address AIS issues.
- Show esprit de corps, being respectful to others participating in AIS Committee initiatives and their statements and opinions.
- Demonstrate prudence in sharing intellectual property shared with AIS Committee members.

## **Conducting Meetings**

### Meeting Planning

It shall be the responsibility of the Steering Committee to work with the AIS Committee Chair to plan AIS Committee meetings, including logistical planning, development of an agenda, organizing field trips, and solicitation of speakers. As a general rule, an announcement should be sent to the AIS Committee members at least two months prior to the meeting and contain, at a minimum, the meeting dates and location, and a

draft meeting agenda.

### Meeting Notes

The AIS Committee Chair is responsible for ensuring that committee meetings are documented. Meeting notes should contain and clearly denote the following: (1) meeting agenda, (2) discussion points, (3) action items with associated responsible parties, (4) committee decisions, and (5) a record of attendance. AIS Committee meeting notes shall be distributed to the committee membership for review no later than two months after the meeting and shall be finalized no later than four months after the meeting. Once finalized, AIS Committee meeting notes shall be distributed to all committee members and added to the AIS Committee web page on the MICRA web site. Steering Committee notes shall be distributed to the Steering Committee members for review no later than 30 days after the meeting and shall be finalized no later than 60 days after the meeting. Once finalized, Steering Committee notes shall be distributed to all Steering Committee members.

### Attendance and Participation

The AIS Committee meetings are open to all AIS Committee members and agency staff from MICRA member agencies. Participation may be expanded to include guest speakers and technical experts to assist the committee members conduct committee business. Invitations or recommendations for participation of attendees that are not staff from MICRA member agencies should be directed to and approved by the AIS Committee Chair.

### Robert's Rules of Order

The AIS Committee will hold meetings in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, which is a majority-based decision-making tool that works well for simple procedural decisions such as the approval of minutes and agendas, establishment of ad hoc committees and the receipt of common reports. Under Robert's Rules of Order, items of business brought before the AIS Committee must be made in the form of a motion and seconded. A call for additional discussion will be issued. In the case of simple, non-debatable motions, the AIS Committee Chair (or other individual presiding over the meeting) will call the question as follows: "All those in favor of the motion say aye" and, after the affirmative voice is expressed, "All those opposed say nay." An option to abstain from voting may also be included and, in such cases, abstentions will count towards quorum. The AIS Committee Chair (or other individuals presiding over the meeting) will announce the results of the vote in an unambiguous manner such as "the ayes (nays) have it," "the motion passes (fails)" or "the resolution is adopted (defeated)."

### **Decision Making**

The AIS Committee will attempt to achieve consensus in all aspects of its work through substantial discussions on topics prior to making motions or taking votes. However, motions addressing the AIS Committee's day-to-day operations and recurring business items will only require a supporting majority (greater than 50%) to pass if quorum is reached. Major decisions and recommendations require a two-thirds majority approval of the committee membership. If decisions or recommendations from the AIS Committee reflect a majority view, but lack consensus, the committee will include a minority opinion when requested.

### Quorum

Quorum is defined as the number of distinct votes needed to make a vote valid. If quorum is not reached, the vote must be repeated later when quorum can be achieved.

For Steering Committee decisions, quorum will require five of the six sub-basin representatives. Quorum will be reduced for each sub-basin that does not have an active representative participating on the Steering Committee. For example, if only four sub-basin have representation on the Steering Committee, then quorum will be three of the four representatives. The AIS Committee Chair will only have a vote and count towards quorum when serving in a dual role as a sub-basin representative.

For AIS Committee decisions made during meetings, quorum will consist of all AIS Committee voting positions present at the meeting either in-person or virtually. If a member in attendance fails to cast a vote, it will be counted as an abstention and will count towards quorum.

For AIS Committee decisions made via mail-in vote, at least one more than half of filled AIS Committee voting positions is required for quorum (i.e., 15 if all 28 voting membership positions are filled).

#### Mail-in Votes

Mail-in votes may be called for and submitted by electronic mail. All voting members and alternates shall be mailed a notice of any mail-in vote, including language of the issue to be voted on and the period during which votes will be accepted. Members will be provided at least two weeks before the close of a mail-in vote. Votes must be relayed to the AIS Committee Chair or MICRA Coordinator (as specified) during the specified time period, and only votes from voting members or alternates will be accepted. Votes received outside of the specified voting period, votes not cast by a voting member, and votes by alternate members when the corresponding voting member has already cast a vote will be rejected and not count towards quorum. The AIS Committee Chair or MICRA Coordinator will tally the ayes, nays, and abstentions at the conclusion of the voting period and provide the tally and, upon request, list of names with recorded vote, to the committee members.

#### Amendment of Charter

The AIS Committee Charter may be amended by a two-thirds supporting majority of the voting members. A formal review process should provide all committee members the opportunity to provide input on proposed revisions.

#### Policy Position Statements

When emerging issues warrant, the AIS Committee may choose to develop policy position statements to provide guidance on specific issues. Policy position statements should be developed with input from all AIS Committee members. The AIS Committee will strive for consensus when adopting a policy position statement, but at a minimum, a two-thirds supporting majority vote is required to adopt a new policy position statement or amend an existing statement. The AIS Committee Chair will provide a copy of the adopted or revised policy position statement to the MICRA Executive Board. Adopted policy position statements should be used to guide AIS Committee progression on addressing AIS priorities and made available on the AIS Committee webpage on the MICRA website.



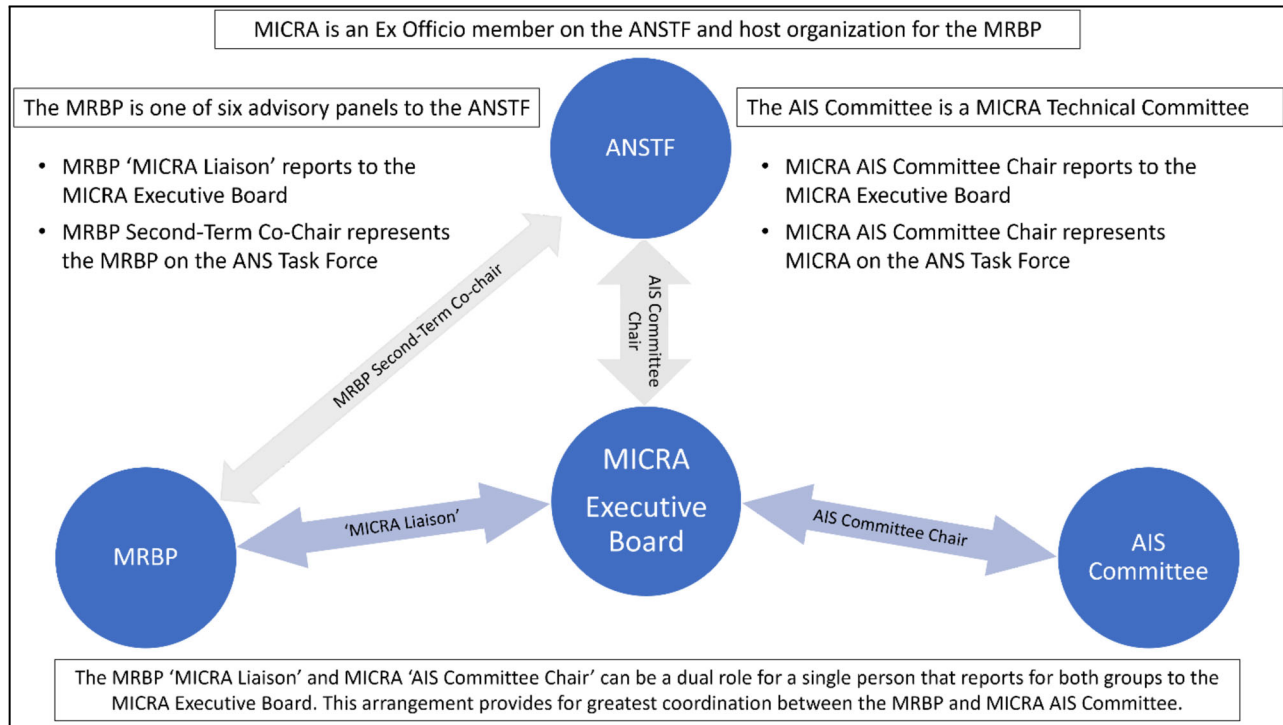


Figure 1. Relationship and representation of the AIS Committee and MRBP to MICRA and the ANS Task Force (ANSTF). The MRBP and AIS Committee are distinct coordinating bodies that support the MICRA Executive Board; however, the MRBP is an advisory committee that reports to the ANSTF whereas the AIS Committee is a standing technical committee that reports to the MICRA Executive Board and whose responsibilities and priorities are determined by MICRA. MICRA is an Ex Officio member of the ANSTF. In coordination with the MICRA Chair and Executive Board, the AIS Committee Chair represents MICRA on the ANS Task Force.

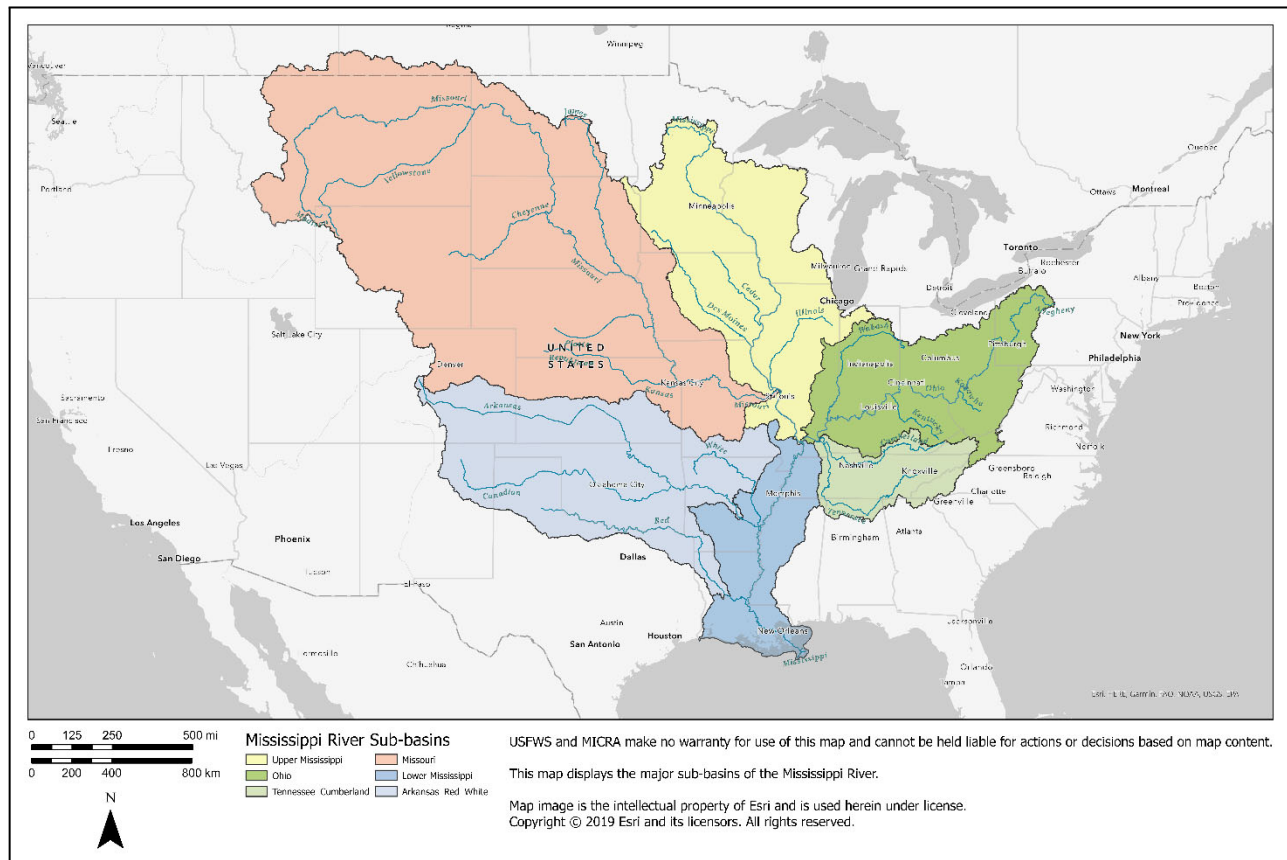


Figure 2. Mississippi River Basin and MICRA's six sub-basin groups.

Table 1. Thirteen MICRA member states are located entirely within a single sub-basin, 13 states have waters within two sub-basins, Kentucky has waters within three sub-basins, and Missouri has waters within four different sub-basins.

State	ARW	LMR	MOR	OHR	TNCR	UMR
Alabama					x	
Arkansas	x	x				
Colorado	x		x			
Georgia					x	
Illinois				x		x
Indiana				x		x
Iowa			x			x
Kansas	x		x			
Kentucky		x		x	x	
Louisiana	x	x				
Minnesota			x			x
Mississippi		x			x	
Missouri	x	x	x			x
Montana			x			
Nebraska			x			
New York				x		
North Carolina				x	x	
North Dakota			x			
Oklahoma	x					
Ohio				x		
Pennsylvania				x		
South Dakota			x			x
Tennessee		x			x	
Texas	x					
Virginia				x	x	
West Virginia				x		
Wisconsin						x
Wyoming			x			