



***Great Rivers Partnership:  
Connecting Science, Policy and People  
to Sustain Great River Systems***

**Michael A. Reuter**, Senior Director, Central USA Conservation Strategies, TNC  
**Yao Yin**, Ph.D., Research Ecologist, Upper Midwest Environmental Science Center, USGS  
**Mike Jawson**, Ph.D., Director, Upper Midwest Environmental Science Center, USGS  
**Karin Krchnak**, Director, International Water Policy, TNC  
**Diane Rudin**, Senior Advisor, Mississippi River Program, TNC

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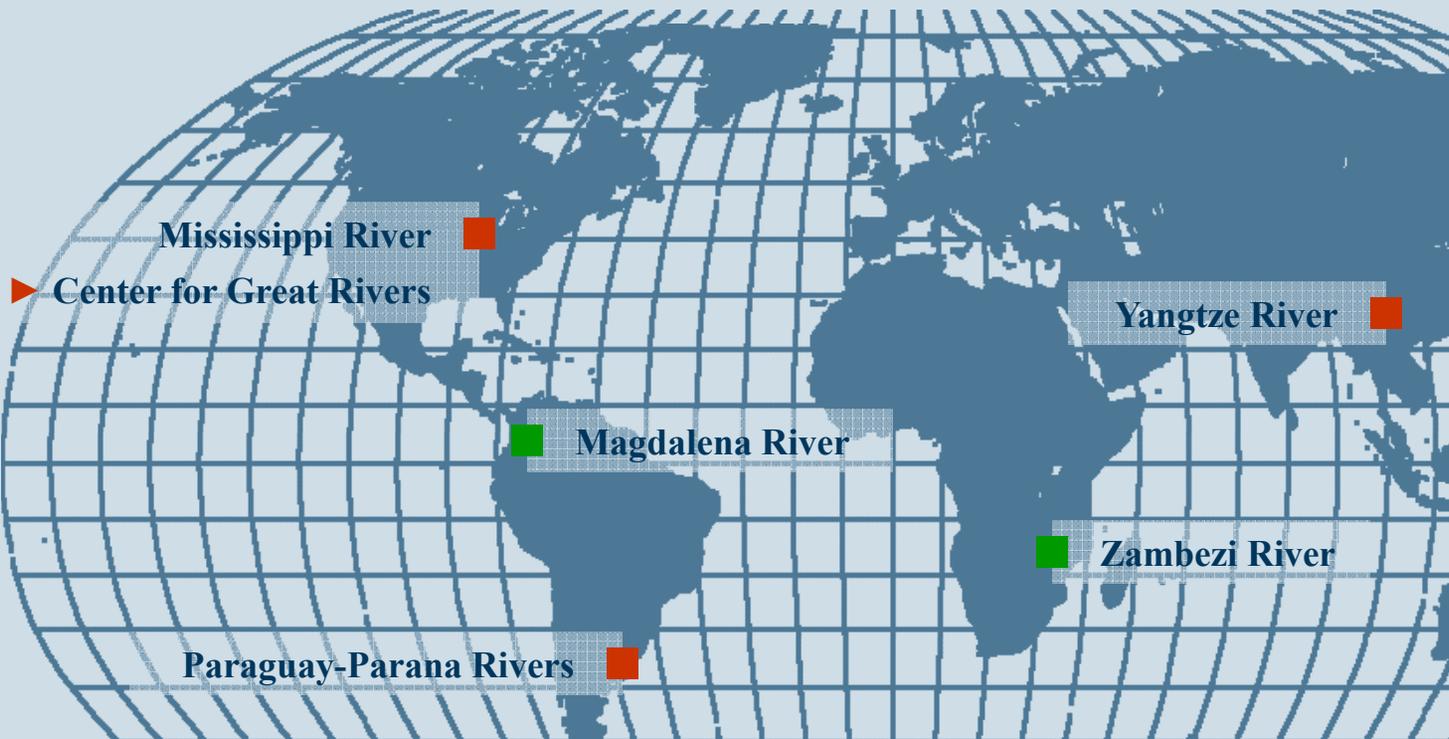


# Great Rivers Partnership

The Nature Conservancy   
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™



*A partnership to sustain great river systems around the world for people and nature using the Mississippi River as a case study*



Mississippi River



▶ Center for Great Rivers

Yangtze River



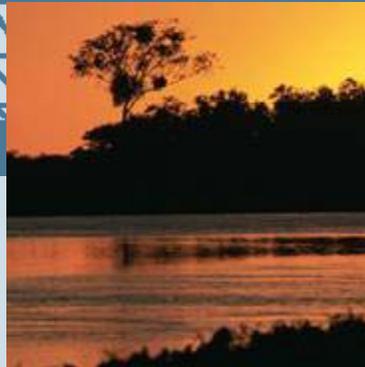
Magdalena River



Zambezi River

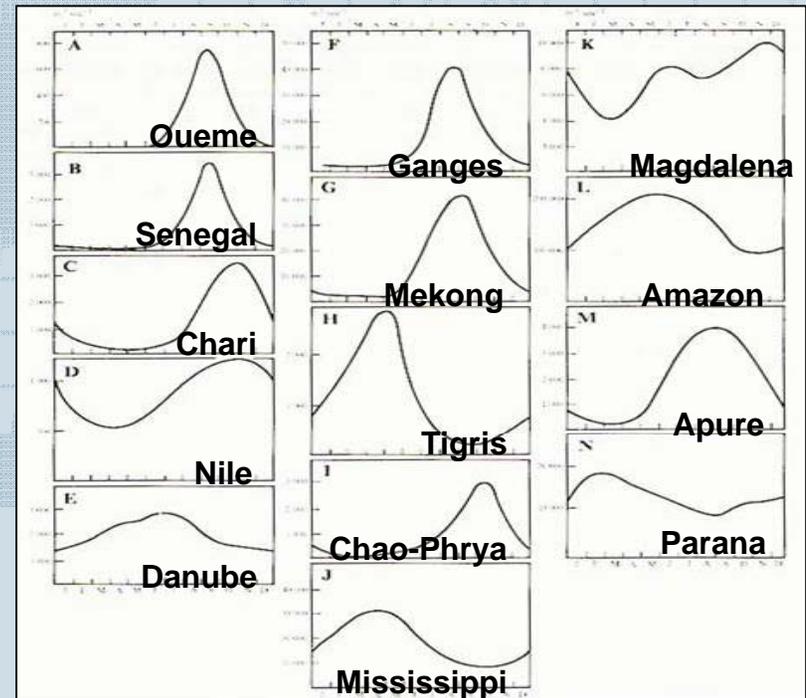


Paraguay-Parana Rivers



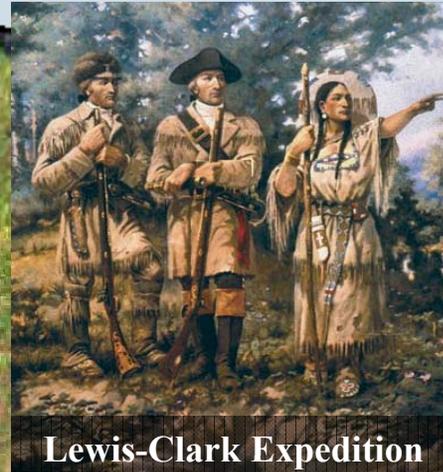
# Defining Great Rivers

- Adapted from R.L. Welcomme's criterion for major river-floodplains
- Basic criterion is biological: the flood is sufficiently long lasting, predictable, and extensive that organisms have evolved life history strategies to exploit it
- Great rivers are highly productive "working rivers" vital to cultural heritage and economic prosperity in their regions

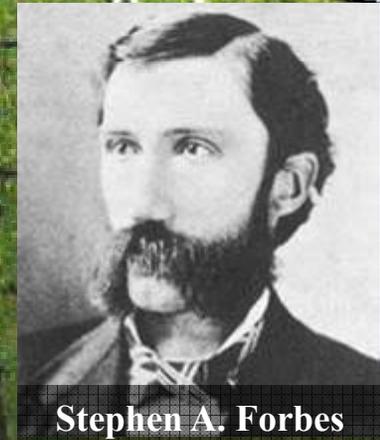


# The Mississippi: Case Study for Great Rivers

*We can think about the Mississippi River in sophisticated ways because of unequalled investments in knowledge made over two centuries by many organizations and individuals ... from Lewis and Clark to the USGS Long-Term Resource Monitoring Program.*



Lewis-Clark Expedition



Stephen A. Forbes

Charles Kofoid and Miles Newberry in high water on Illinois River, early 1900s



LTRMP staff, early 2000s



# The Mississippi: Case Study for Great Rivers

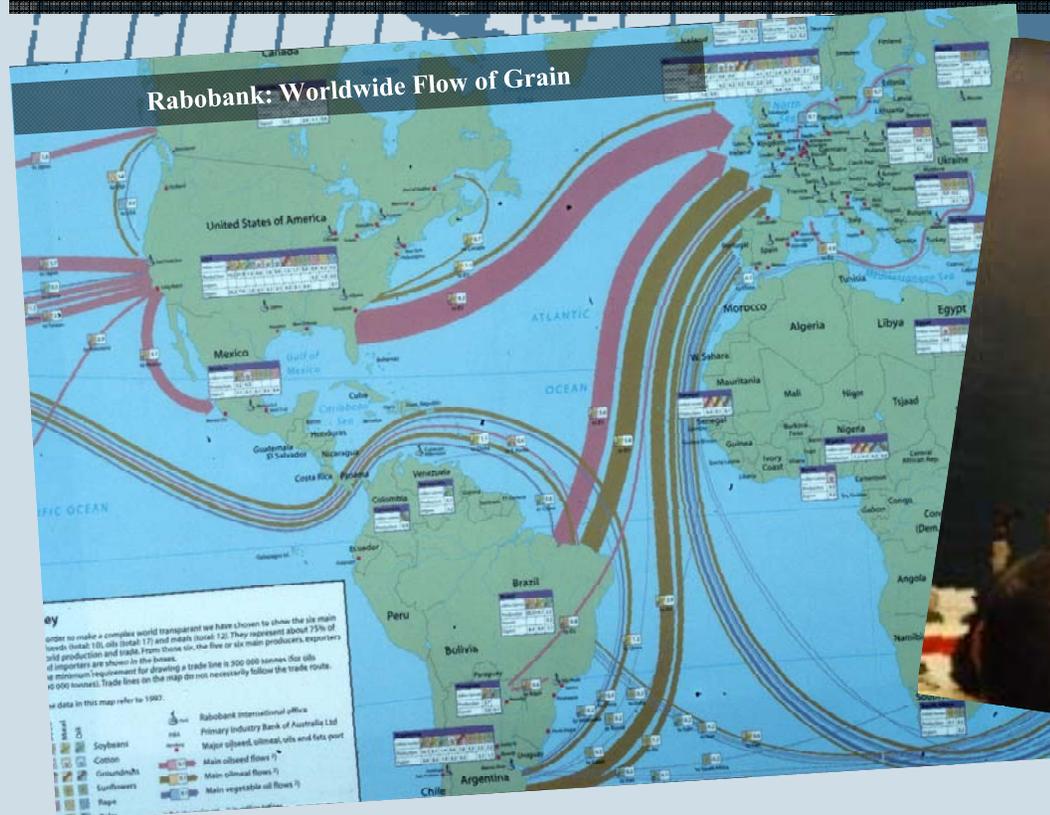
*Yet often the Mississippi remains an “orphan” (NRC) – information is fragmented, programs and projects disconnected. To sustain the Mississippi River, we must get past isolated agendas and address the major issues of our day – food, water, climate, energy, transportation – through collaboration.*

*Through the GRP, TNC and partners are focused on building an enduring, future-oriented systems approach that engages all perspectives in adaptive, sustainable management of the Mississippi River, and fosters an inter-generational commitment to implementation.*



# The Mississippi: Case Study for Great Rivers

*We can benefit by understanding our issues from a global perspective and learning from others managing great river systems, addressing similar issues. Through the GRP, TNC and partners are also focused on the need to share knowledge and provide global leadership in the management of large working rivers because “each of the world’s largest [rivers] requires a basin-wide sustainable management strategy, built on new institutional frameworks ... that accurately reflects the inescapable linkages of economy and human well-being to ... ecosystem sustainability (Keddy).”*



Source: Excerpts from Keddy, Paul A. et al., "Wet and Wonderful: The World's Largest Wetlands Are Conservation Priorities" BioScience, Jan. 2009.

# GRP: Emerging Opportunities

Mississippi River: 1) Design process for developing collaborative integrated river management strategy at system scale (\$25K; 1Q2010); 2) Create partner agreement for implementation of Coastal Louisiana Restoration Plan (\$50K; 2Q2010); Support assessment of USDA Mississippi River Basin Initiative for nutrients (\$2M; 2010-12); 3) Pilot research on floodplain ecosystem services; 4) Develop sustainability indicators for agricultural landscapes as part of Field to Market (\$150K; 2010-11); 5) Convene scientists and users across 10 cities with *America Speaks* to assess river health and future scenarios (\$1M; 4Q2010).

Yangtze River: 1) Share best practices for monitoring river health and supporting adaptive management ; 2) Explore additional areas for exchange, e.g., Amur, Pearl, Yellow,, and Mekong (\$100K; 2010-2011).

Magdalena River: 1) Advise Cormagdalena on creation of integrated river basin management plan with USACE (\$2M; 2010-11).

Mekong River: 1) Share best practices for integrated river basin management and governance between Mississippi River Commission and Mekong River Commission (\$100K; 2010).



*Science Exchange  
between the Yangtze and  
Mississippi Rivers:  
Supporting Monitoring and  
Adaptive Management*



# Natural Experiments



Basin latitudes

# River:

# YANGTZE

# MISSISSIPPI

Basin Area

1,808,500 km<sup>2</sup>

3,202,000 km<sup>2</sup>

Length

5,980 km

3,703 km

Ave. discharge

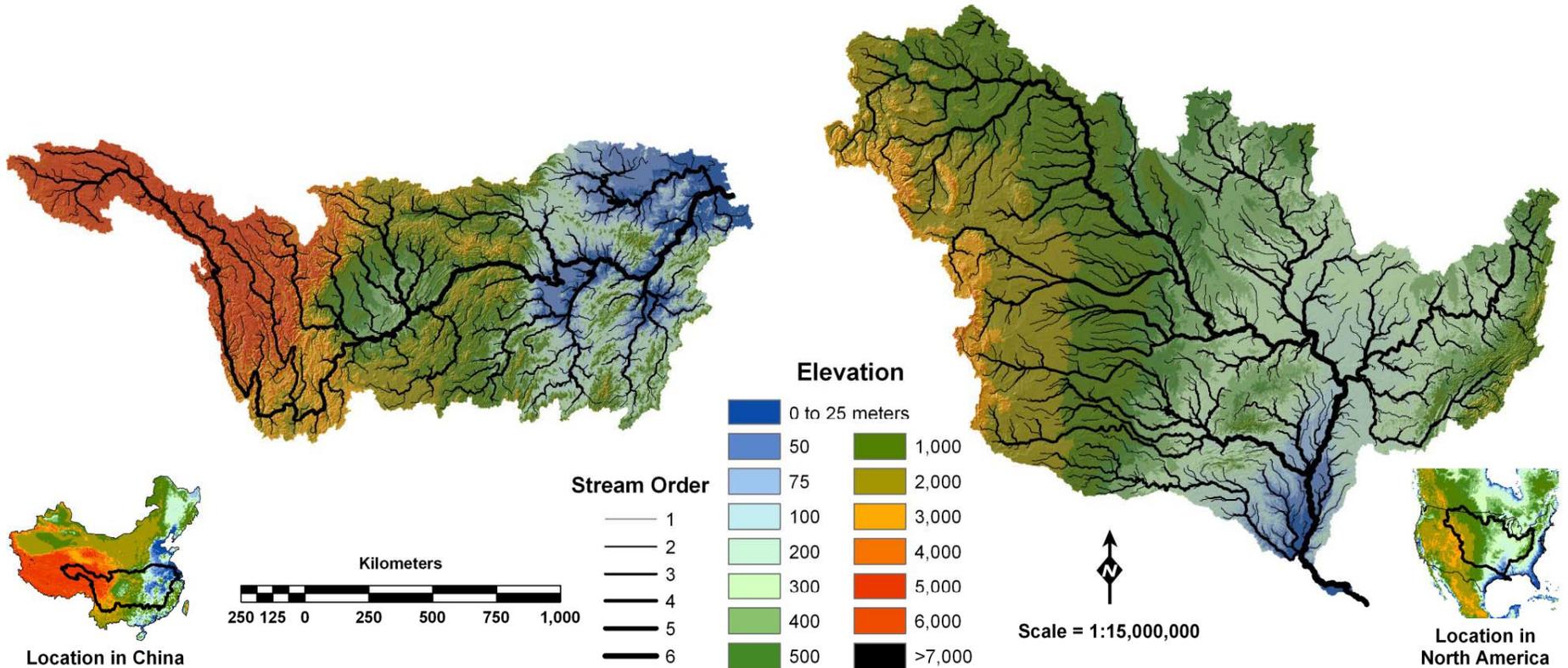
34,000 m<sup>3</sup>/s

17,545 m<sup>3</sup>/s

Ann. sediment load

499,000,000 m-tons/yr  
(pre-dams)

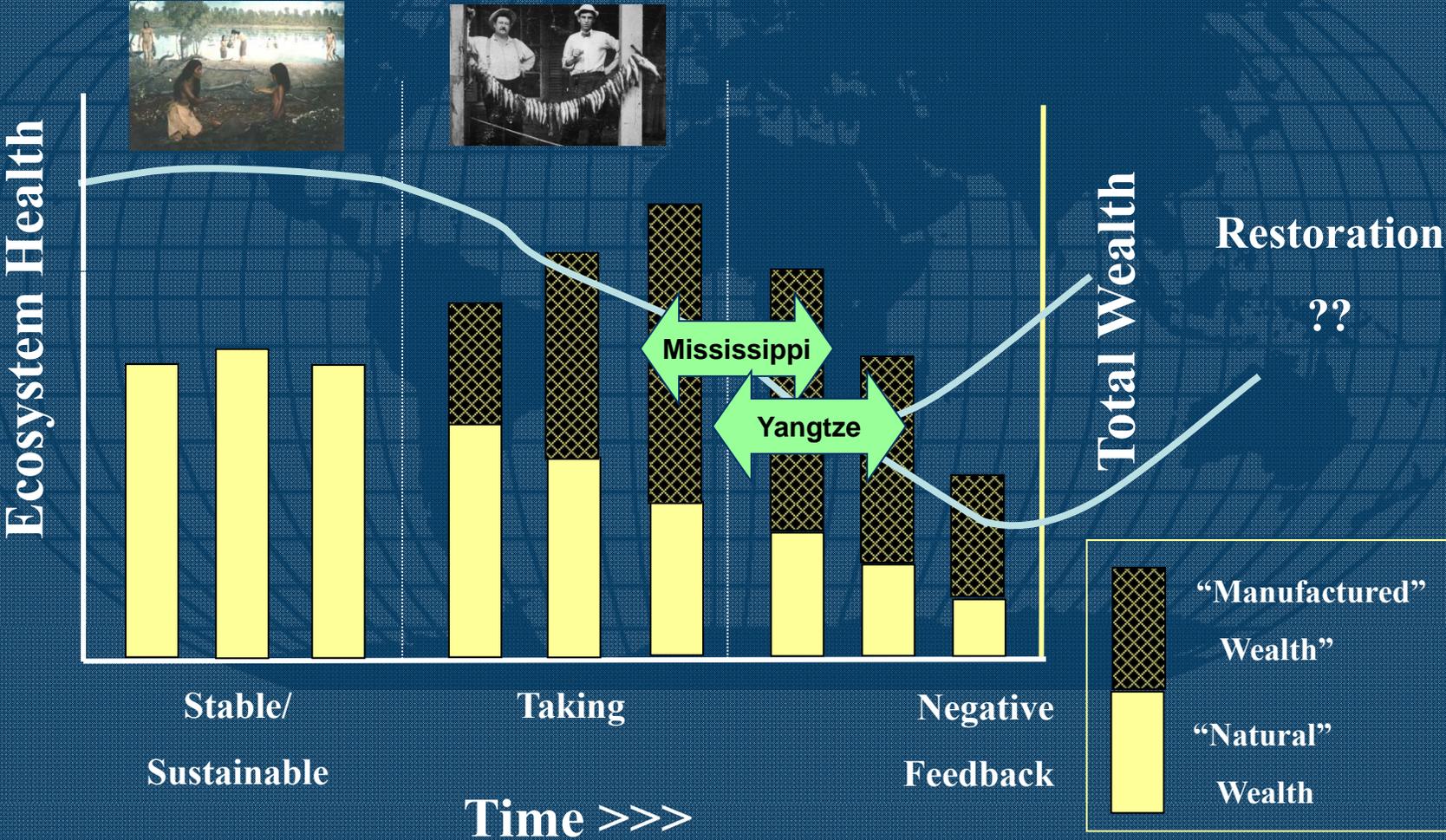
210,000,000 m-tons/yr  
(post-dams)



Source: USGS, Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center, 2008

# Theoretical Health/Wealth Relationships

During 3 Stages of Natural Resource Use

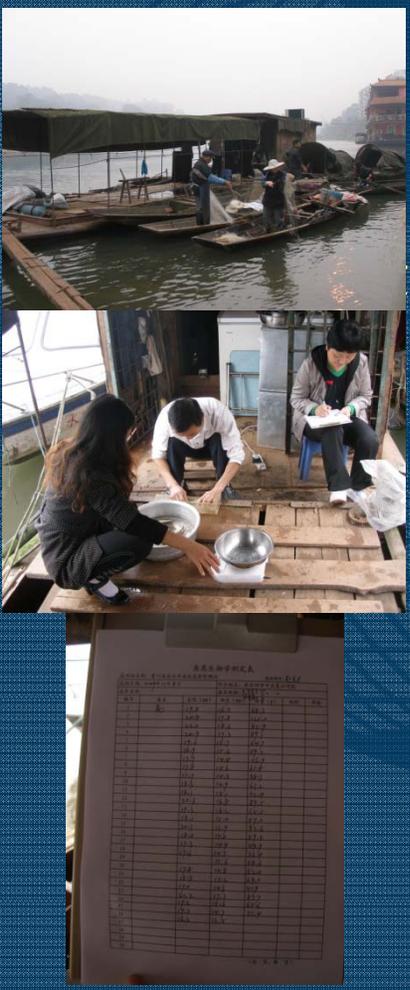


# Talks in Beijing at Hydrology Bureau

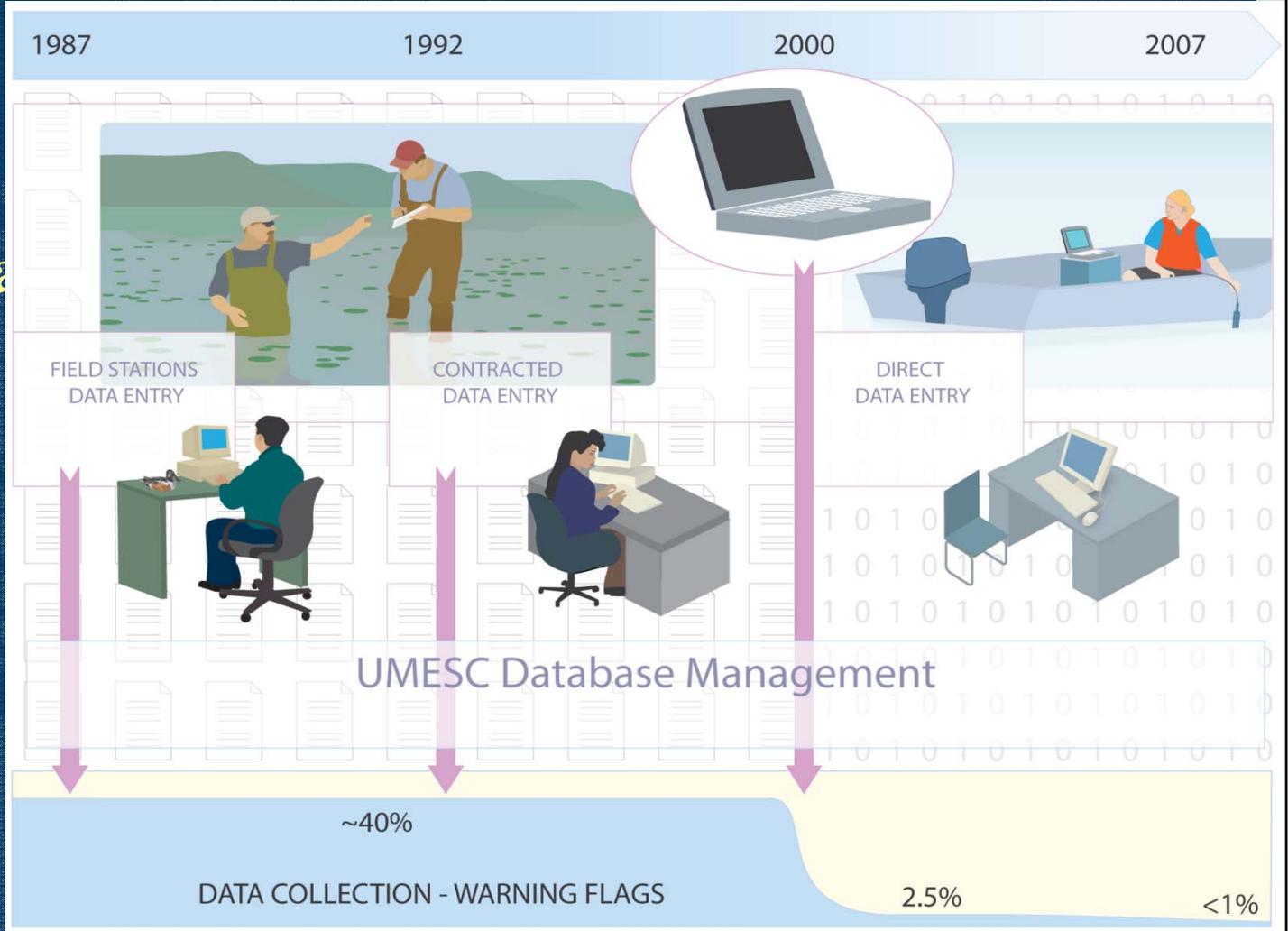


# Status of the Monitoring Networks

## Yangtze



## Mississippi



# On the Mississippi River



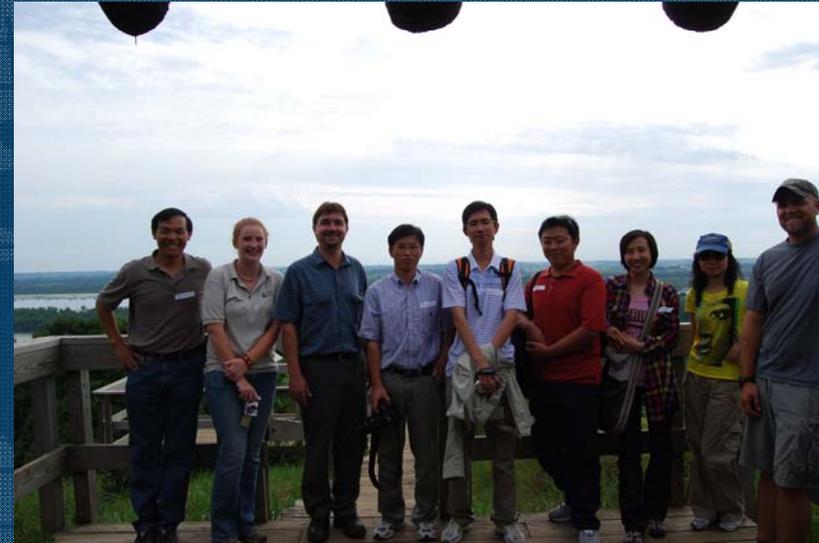
# On the Yangtze River



# On the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau



# Exploring the rivers



**“Here, I see harmony between humans and the river”, said Mr. Weili Lou of the Yangtze River Fishery Management Office in Shanghai after a kayaking trip on the Mississippi River in La Crosse, Wisconsin**

# From Meetings to Actual Field Work



# Opportunities on the Horizon

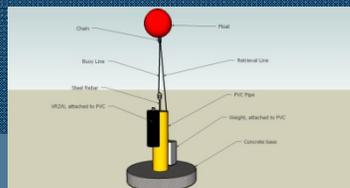
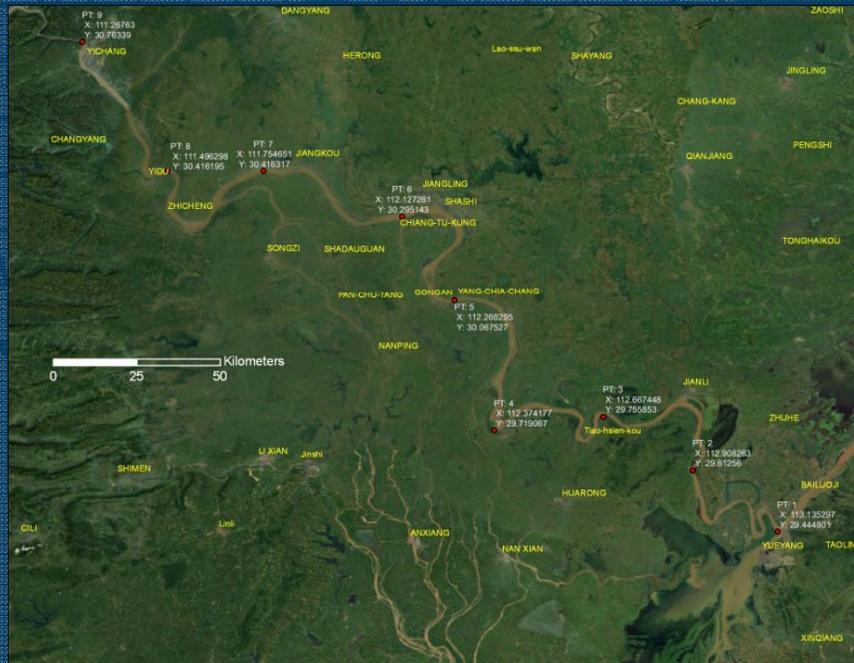
In November 2009, our Chinese partners acquired US \$1.9 million from Chinese central government to study Asian carps in the Yangtze during the next 3 years

## Illinois River



### Illinois River infested with giant silver carp

Tuesday, December 22, 2009  
The Associated Press



## Sonic Telemetry Network

# Applying the Yangtze Experience Worldwide



**Upper Yellow River**

Because of our success on the Yangtze River, the government of China invites us to expand the science exchange, including to the Yellow, Pearl, and Amur River basins. We believe the same approach can be applied to many other great rivers in the world.

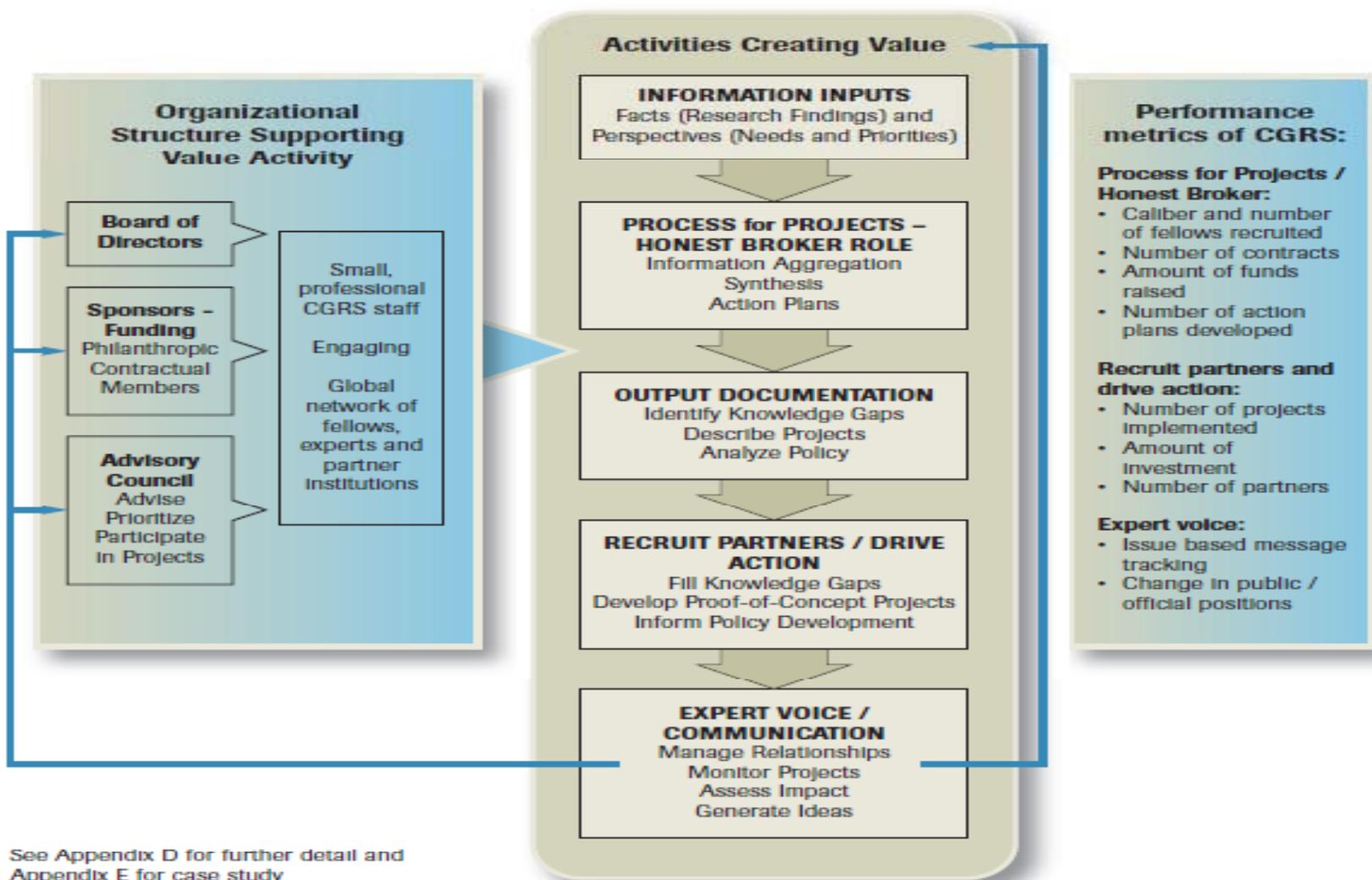
# Sharing the Challenge to Sustain Great Rivers



## Yangtze-Mississippi Monitoring Exchange

- Designed to meet specific needs and objectives of Yangtze Water Resources Commission and Yangtze Fisheries Commission
- Staffed by US Geological Survey and The Nature Conservancy as part of the Great Rivers Partnership
- Potential for expanding to Yellow River, Pearl, Amur, Mekong with YFC funds

# Great Rivers Center: Adaptive Management Model

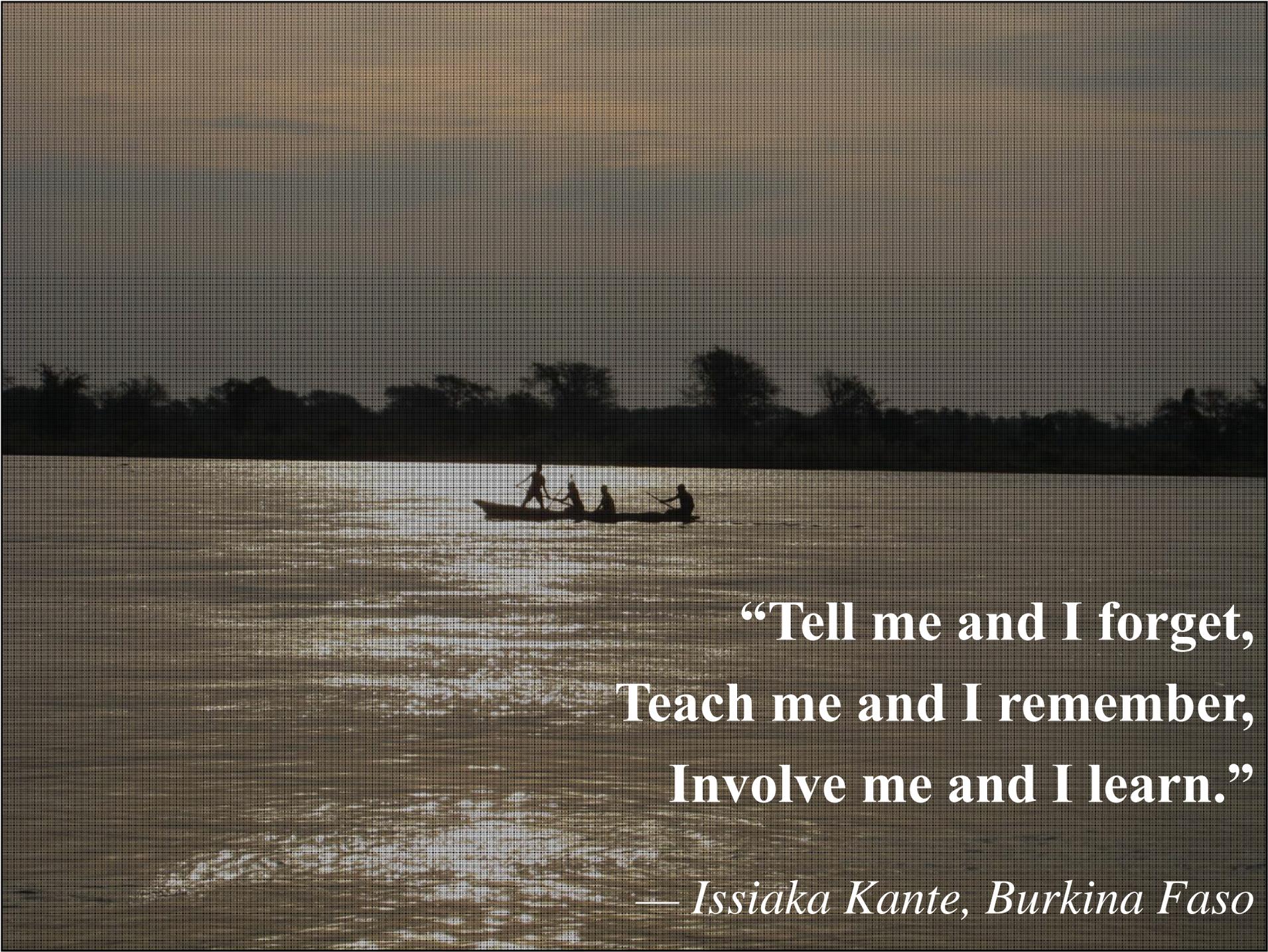


# Summary

- Since 2005, the GRP has initiated work to sustain great rivers on four continents – including the Mississippi, Yangtze, Paraguay-Parana, Magdalena, Zambezi – and raised more than \$60 million. The GRP has engaged US-based multi-national corporations in this endeavor, and has engaged a wide variety of stakeholders in promoting a systems-based approach to river management.
- USGS and USACE have been key federal partners. USGS and the LTRMP bring an invaluable depth of science and experience in informing adaptive management, based on the Mississippi River which can serve as a global case study. The Yangtze-Mississippi exchange demonstrates the potential to leverage this investment.
- To realize the promise of the GRP over time, it needs a stronger institutional foundation and shared leadership. We envision a partner-oriented organization affiliated with top-tier universities and institutions. The mission will focus on the challenge of sustainability in the context of great rivers by sharing knowledge among the people who depend on these great rivers globally, and informing systems-based management.

# Some Questions

- What are the strengths/weaknesses of this idea? What can we improve upon, or position to help advance the larger national agenda?
- What can we do together to make this exchange more successful and enduring?
- Who else should we talk to? What further connections should we be making to secure additional funding and partnerships? What university or institution could provide a strong foundation for next generation?



**“Tell me and I forget,  
Teach me and I remember,  
Involve me and I learn.”**

*— Issiaka Kante, Burkina Faso*