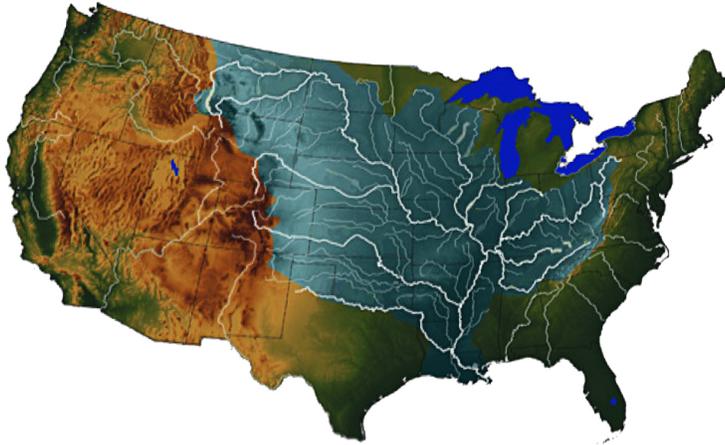


# BIG RIVER COALITION



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## **NASDA and SASDA Support Mississippi River Ship Channel Deepening Project**

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) hosted their Annual Meeting in New Orleans yesterday (Roosevelt Hotel). The President of NASDA and Commissioner of Louisiana's Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Dr. Michael Strain championed a motion supporting the deepening of the Mississippi River Ship Channel to 50 feet. Earlier in the week, Dr. Strain led the effort to gain the support of the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture (SASDA) on the same motion.

The text of the motion as ratified via an Action Item by both NASDA and SASDA reads:

“NASDA encourages the Administration and Congress to prioritize deepening and upgrading of ports in any infrastructure package.

Deepening of ports is a necessary step in allowing entry of larger ships and supports U.S. agriculture exports. For example, the deepening of the Mississippi River Ship Channel (MRSC) to 50 feet from the Port of Baton Rouge (Mile 232.4 Above Head of Passes (AHP) to the Gulf of Mexico.”

The Big River Coalition is pleased to receive the support of NASDA and SASDA and has benefitted from a close working relationship with Dr. Strain much of the last decade. The annual challenge to maintain federally authorized channel dimensions on the MRSC is critical to agricultural exports (all exports) transiting the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MRT). The MRT connects over 350 million acres of agricultural lands to international trade via waterborne commerce on barge and ship traffic departing the revolving door to global trade represented by Southwest Pass (the entrance and exit to the MRSC). Dr. Strain supports the BRC efforts to increase the allocations of the Harbor Maintenance Tax to maintain the Ship Channel and to deepen the channel to 50 feet to maximize the reduced transportation costs to the American Farmers.

# BIG RIVER COALITION

## About the Big River Coalition:

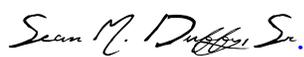
The Big River Coalition (BRC) was created in Fiscal Year 2011 in response to the announcement by the Commander of the United States Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) Mississippi Valley Division that channel maintenance on the Mississippi River Ship Channel, Gulf to Baton Rouge (Louisiana) would be limited by the dedicated funding (Operations and Maintenance [O&M] budget). Prior to this position change the Mississippi River Ship Channel received preferential treatment and often received additional funding from other USACE projects. After the 1989 grounding of the M/V MARSHAL KONYEV (Pilottown) that virtually closed the Ship Channel to all traffic, the USACE's Headquarters announced in a position statement that it would maintain the nation's most critical navigation channel. The BRC originally focused on obtaining additional funding to supplement the shortfall in the Corps' O&M budget, to strive to establish a legislative firewall around the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund and to represent members of the Mississippi River navigation industry in matters related to coastal restoration. As our membership grew and continued to make effective progress on these initiatives, members supported the Coalition's commitment to actively advocate for the deepening of the Mississippi River Ship Channel Gulf to Baton Rouge to 50 feet.

The Coalition's membership depends on the efforts of the USACE and the federal investments made to build and maintain navigation structures and navigable channels across the 31 states that are connected by the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MRT). Economic studies have suggested that the MRT has an annual economic impact of over \$400 billion on the national economy, while our transportation infrastructure and channels suffer from neglect as perpetuated by chronic and long-term underinvestment.

## About the NASDA:

NASDA represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries, and directors of the departments of agriculture in all fifty states and four U.S. territories. NASDA grows and enhances agriculture by forging partnerships and creating consensus to achieve sound policy outcomes between state departments of agriculture, the federal government, and stakeholders. The 2017 NASDA Annual Meeting is one of two annual meetings for NASDA. For more information about this event, please click [here](#).

Sincerely,



Sean M. Duffy, Sr.  
Executive Director