

Creating The Confluence Flood Plain Joint Venture Partnership

The Ultimate Preservation Effort of the Confluence Flood Plain

The vision of long-term preservation for the Confluence region sets out a concept of a joint venture partnership. This loose partnership of public agencies and private organizations will develop and initiate the goal of preserving, restoring, and maintaining approximately 30,000 acres of habitat and flood plain at the Confluence of North America's two largest rivers through conservation easements, agricultural easements and private and public land acquisitions.



At the core of the preservation effort is a goal to preserve a critical mass of land for public recreation. GRHA has identified several large tracts of land suitable for private and public acquisitions on a willing seller/willing buyer basis. These lands will be 500 to 1,000 acres in mass and will be open to the public for a variety of recreational opportunities. Surrounding these lands will be private conservation and agricultural easements on farms and duck clubs.

The incredible wildlife habitat which exists in the Confluence is reason enough to preserve the flood plain. The fisheries supported by the Confluence Flood Plain are equally rich and diverse. Likely, a majority of the estimated 485 species of birds, fish, mussels and mammals in the Upper Mississippi and Missouri River basins are found in the Confluence area, and it supports a remnant of the large flood plain forest that once dominated the riverine area. It is home to enormous flocks of waterfowl, the federally threatened Bald Eagle and hundreds of species of migratory birds and other flora and fauna. Conservatively, 14 million ducks pass over or adjacent to this flood plain each year followed by untold millions more migratory birds.



The confluence also has a strong agricultural heritage which is worth preserving. In addition, the confluence is a valuable water storage area. During the peak of the 1993 flood, it held more than 260 billion gallons of water.

Great Rivers Habitat Alliance's proposal for preserving the Confluence is a win-win project. The project seeks to preserve half of the 100,000-acre confluence flood plain through acquisition of land and conservation easements of a **willing seller/donor basis**.

The result will be 30,000 acres of land preserved in a matrix of small, intensely managed private and publicly owned tracts and an irregular patchwork of agricultural and conservation easements.



All land and easements will be acquired from willing sellers and willing donors. It is a unique approach but not without precedence. Similar measures have occurred at Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge in Southern Illinois, the ACE Basin in South Carolina, and other locations in the United States.

GRHA has continued collecting support for the Confluence preservation from national organizations, state agencies, municipalities, corporations, individuals, other nonprofit conservation organizations and flood plain landowners. The preservation concept has received support from Ducks Unlimited, the City of St. Paul, Missouri, Missouri Coalition for the Environment, and numerous national conservation organizations. In addition, GRHA has held many informational meetings for more than 150 landowners to educate them about land-use alternatives and gain support for the preservation concept.

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Community Benefits

- Preserves massive flood storage area.
- Preserves a resource unique in North America.
- Preserves a traditional way of life – the Family Farm.
- Enhances community recreation opportunities.
- Economic value:
 - Dog Retrieval Trials
 - working dogs
 - hunting dogs
 - Nature tours
 - Wetlands education
 - Increased public hunting opportunity
- Protects ourselves (tax payers) from another flood buy-out debacle.
- Enhances the largest migratory bird corridor in North America.

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Landowner Benefits

- Creates agricultural/conservation enterprise zone in flood plain.
- Draws more federal \$ into St. Charles flood plain.
- Expands number of **federal** programs available to landowner.
- Willing landowner participants only
 - no condemnation
- Increases land values.
- Increases opportunities for additional income.
- Hunting leases – ducks, pheasants/upland game, turkey, deer, dove.
- Cuts down on crop predation.
- Expands private matching funding to landowner for federal \$.
- Provides opportunity for off-season custom farming, earthwork, specialty wetland restoration, wetland planting, etc.
- Unique private/public initiative relieves burden from taxpayer.

Recently, GRHA entered into partnership agreements with several conservation organizations. The organizations will actively seek conservation easements with key landowners and work to preserve the Confluence Flood Plain.

Great Rivers Habitat Alliance is conducting a capital campaign which will raise funds for preservation of the flood plain. Over the next two years, GRHA will attempt to raise \$3.5 million to preserve the flood plain. The funds will be allocated as follows:

Land Acquisition Program	\$2,000,000
Easement Acquisition Program	\$1,000,000
Secure Easement Donations.....	\$250,000
Easement Enhancement Program ..	\$250,000

Long-term preservation of the Confluence Flood Plain is essential for waterfowl habitat, migratory bird rest areas, fish spawning areas, soil management for agriculture and as an economic protection measure for existing urban areas.

