

# A Partnership for Lock Operations

Wallace (Wally)Venable

Technical Coordinator

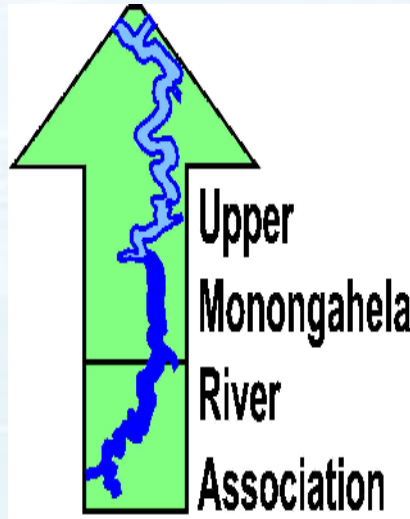
Upper Monongahela River Association

[www.UpperMon.org](http://www.UpperMon.org)

Emeritus Associate Professor

Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering

West Virginia University



# What is UMRA?

- The purpose of the Upper Monongahela River Association (UMRA) is to promote the general development of the Upper Monongahela River, primarily in West Virginia.
- We are a 501-c corporation, acting primarily as Board of volunteer technical experts.



**We the People of the United States  
have created a problem.**

We the People of the United States  
have created a problem.

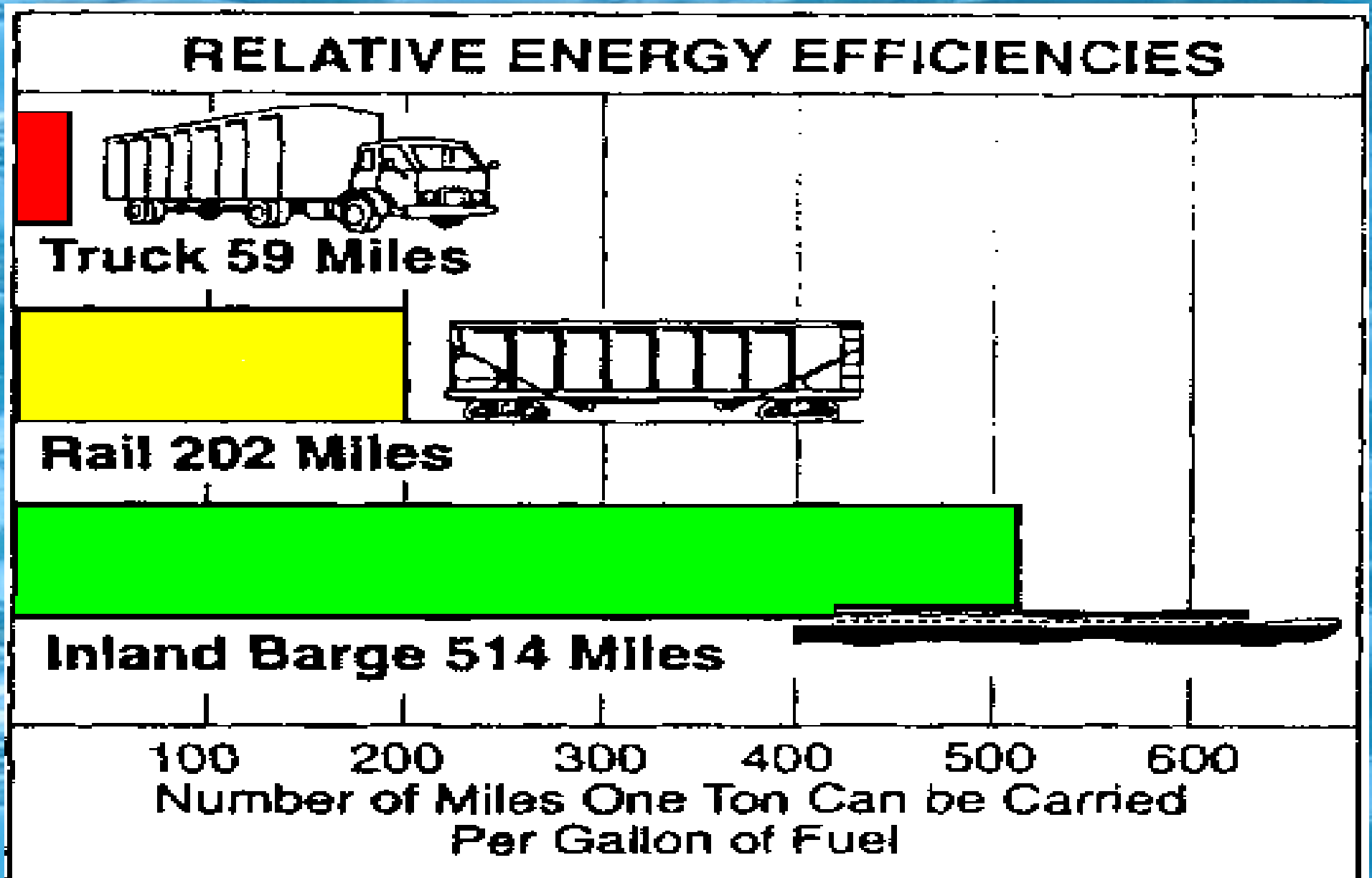
We don't give the US Army  
Corps of Engineers enough  
money to pay for building,  
fixing, and operating our  
locks and dams.



# Why do we want locks and dams?

- Reduce fossil fuel use
- Reduce pollution
- Reduce road and rail traffic
- Increase safety
- Move "impossible loads"
- Stabilize water levels
- Provide recreation

# Why Waterways?



S.E. Eastman, *Fuel Efficiency in Freight Transportation*, American Waterway Operators, Inc., 1980.



# Why Waterways?





Why can't the US Army Corps of Engineers live within its Congressionally authorized budget?

- Aging infrastructure and the increased cost of operations.
- Can we blame Congress?
- End of "Earmarking"



# Upper Monongahela River “Service Reduction Plan”

- US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) held a meeting in Morgantown on July 17, 2012 to present the USACE Proposed Upper Monongahela River Service Reduction Plan
- The Monongahela is not being singled out for service reductions.
- Upper Monongahela River - 3 Locks
- Allegheny River - 3 Locks
- 63 locks across the country (14 Corps Districts) will be likely to suffer service reductions.

# Upper Monongahela River Proposed “Service Reduction Plan”

- The Inland Marine Transportation System (IMTS) Board of Directors (an assembly of Corps officers) has decided that an IMTS wide approach will be developed for evaluating the Levels of Operating Service.
- Hildebrand and Opekiska Locks **to operate** only **for commercial vessels** and by appointment only.



# Lock Usage "Metrics"

- Only "Commercial Lockages" count.
- Number of commercial vessels does not count.
- Recreational use "Does not count."
- Governmental use "Does not count."

Our "You Can't Do That" Campaign  
- Petitions and Resolutions



Planning to "Turn Failure into Success"

# Can We Operate the Locks?

- Locks in England are operated by boat crews.
- Locks in some areas are operated under contracts.
- Can we create a partnership under which a state or local group operates the locks?



# Previous Federal Closures

- Little Kanawha River
- Muskingum River
- Kentucky River

# All Locks are *Not* Alike

- Size
- Mechanics
- Location
- Condition on turn-over



# Upper Mon Locks

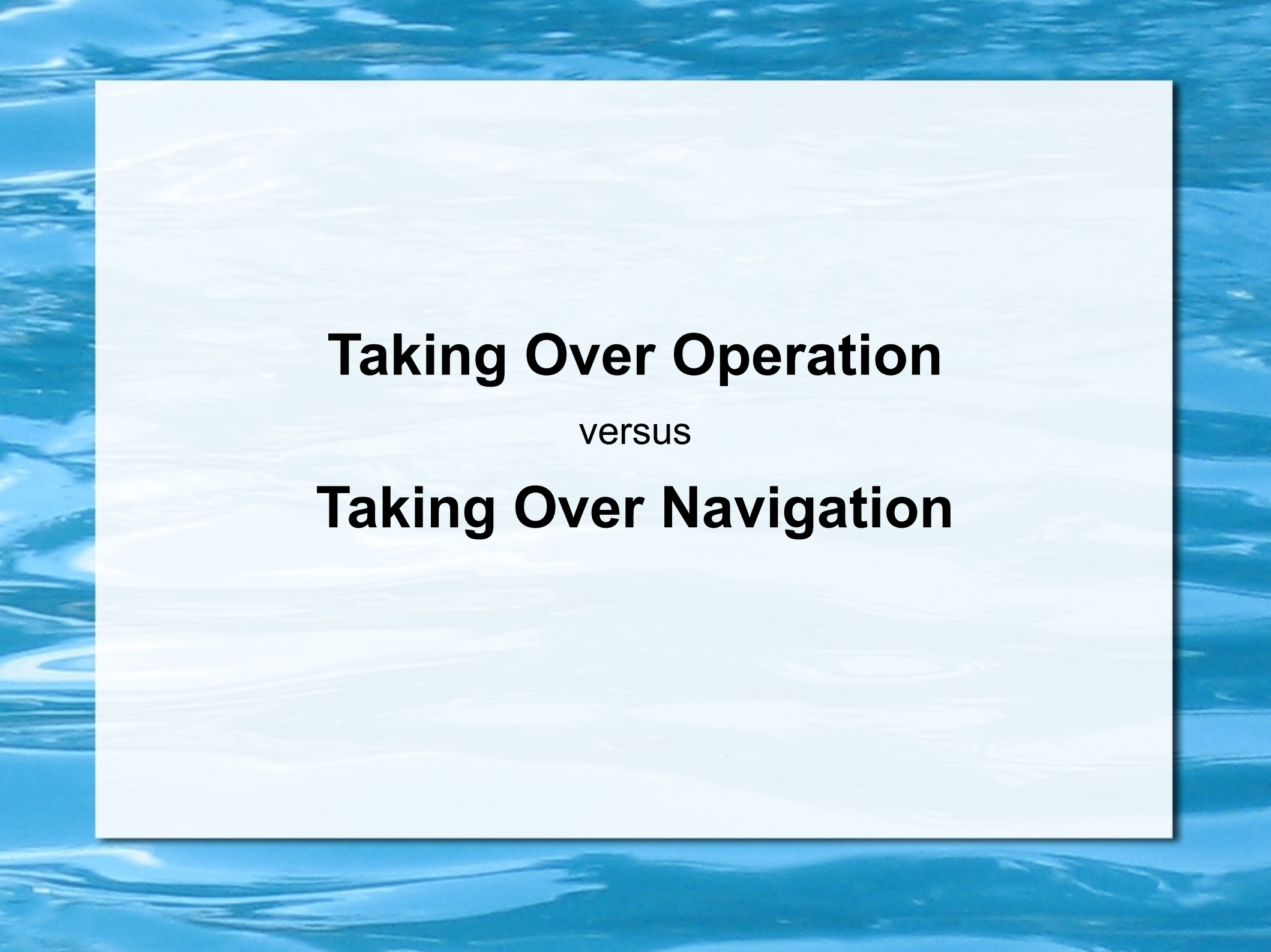
- Size
  - Chamber 86 by 600 feet
  - Gates about 45 feet wide
- Mechanics - electro-hydraulic
- Location – remote but close
- Condition – generally excellent



# Upper Mon Locks







**Taking Over Operation**  
versus  
**Taking Over Navigation**

# All States are Not Alike

- WV DNR vs PA FBC
- State Park Priorities
- DOT
- Day-to-Day Administrator has to like project



# **We Can't Just Choose the Partners**

- Corps of Engineers
- Homeland Security
- WV Congressional Delegation
- WV Dept. Natural Resources
- WV Governor
- WV Dept. Transportation?
- Monongalia County Commission?

# Building a Partnership

- Federal + State?
- Federal + Local?
- Federal + Corporation?



# Staffing

- Volunteers?
- Minimum wage ?

# **An Easy Job?**

- Generally low physical demands
- Generally repetitive
- Solitude
- Real risk
- Weather exposure



# Projecting Costs

Assume

- 6 months of weekend operation
- 1 operator for each of 2 locks
- Corps projects saving about \$200,000 per year

(Corps employee = “good job” with good pay, lifetime employment & great benefits)

# Projecting Costs

- Gross pay \$200 per day, “no benefits”
- Basic payroll \$20,800

**Plus overhead and training & administrative costs**



# **We Are Trying to Prepare a Plan**

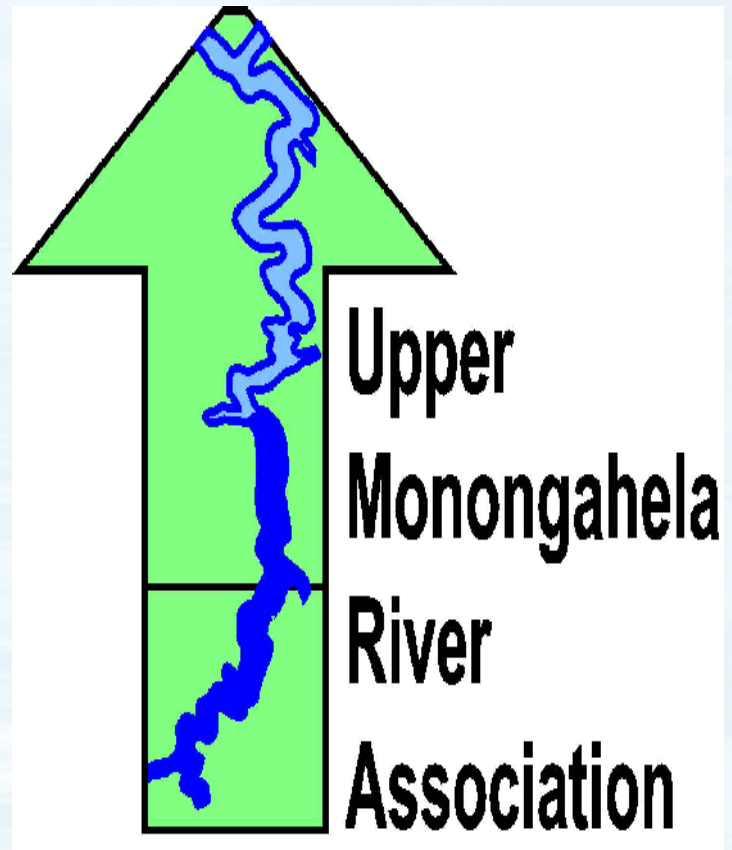
- Plan must meet technical requirements of relevant Federal, State, and local authorities
- Plan must appeal to a “sponsoring” agency

# A Supersonic Time-Line

- Corps plans to suspend recreational lock operations in ***Winter 2012***
- Boating groups are planning 2013 season events now
- Bass fishing tournaments draw 80+ out-of-town boats on many weekends



- Expert consultants to agencies in other river watersheds say “it takes years of planning ....”
- UMRA is creating a new national model.



[UpperMon.org](http://UpperMon.org)