



CASE STUDY SPEAKER



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THE MISSISSIPPI FLOOD OF 2011: OPPORTUNITY FOR A NEW APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT?

Management of the Lower Mississippi River for 150 years has focused on supporting navigation and limiting flood risk. The resulting disconnect between North America's largest river and its delta plain has been an underlying cause of the massive ecosystem degradation experienced in coastal Louisiana in recent decades. The flood of 2011 on the Mississippi required the operation of structures and outlets not seen in over 80 years. While the flood risk was low for most as the system performed well, the lost opportunity to capture sediment for the ecosystem and the increased cost of dredging to maintain navigation demonstrate the need to explore other options for river management for the 21st century. Can we develop an approach to management that uses river resources a manner which increases the reliability of marine transportation, reduces the risk of flooding, and provides for the distribution of sediment and water to sustain the coastal ecosystem? Planning for future river management requires consideration of global trade, changes in runoff and agricultural production, and the needs of multiple users who need clean fresh water – without sacrificing the sustainability of a world class ecosystem. This requires policy, science, engineering and management to work toward a common vision.