

Mississippi Mourning: the Geological, Historical, Political and Cultural Ingredients of the Katrina Catastrophe - Why There is No “Big Easy Fix”

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The Mississippi River is one of the world's largest rivers, draining most of the conterminous United States. Since the arrival of the first settlers in the 1500s, the river has been a major artery for trade and the region a rich fish, crop and later oil and gas producer. Millions of years of geological processes have resulted in the vast, immensely thick Mississippi Delta and its adjacent coastal regions. In addition, the Gulf of Mexico is a hurricane-prone region. These combined factors create an extremely vulnerable setting, convincingly demonstrated by extensive federal- and state-funded research during the past few decades. Louisiana decision makers have, therefore, known for a long time that, despite an array of land management practices implemented over the centuries, they were sitting on a time bomb ticking away to an unknown Time Zero. Unique historical, political and cultural elements have contributed to unsustainable management, administrative paralysis and lack of proper mitigation measures. The catastrophe leads many to ask what the exact ingredients for this disaster are and why other countries seem to manage their coastlines better than the Gulf of Mexico States. The lecture aims to show that the situation is hugely complex, both physically and from a human perspective, and that there is currently no Big Easy Fix.

Free will donations will be accepted to assist schools in Baton Rouge purchase uniforms for their suddenly doubled population.

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