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Exploring the barriers to effective federal flood mitigation in the Mississippi River region.

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8-2017

Document Type

Doctoral Dissertation

Degree Name

Ph. D.

Department

Urban and Public Affairs

Degree Program

Urban and Public Affairs, PhD

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Author's Keywords

flooding; disaster studies; hazard research; hazard mitigation; disaster mitigation; mitigation planning

Abstract

This dissertation is a comprehensive study of flood mitigation in the Mississippi River region as it is impacted by federal flood policies and programs. The study begins with a historical narrative of flooding events and flood mitigation that provided the impetus for federal flood mitigation in the late 1920s. The historical narrative sheds light on issues related to federalism, path dependency, dynamic growth, and socio-culture influence during the development of flood mitigation policy. Growth machine theory is used to describe how inequality and disparate access to political power has worked to exacerbate flood disaster outcomes and how this dynamic is legitimately perpetuated via federal policies. The second half of the dissertation is focused on a comprehensive evaluation of current mitigation planning mandates, programs, and planning tools. The dissertation is divided into six chapters, covering the historical development, theoretical implications, a critique of current practices, and future recommendations for federal flood mitigation. Chapter One provides a basic overview of the issues related to federal flood mitigation and the potential shortcomings of the current system. Chapter Two delves into a historical narrative that provides a rich account of early responses to flooding and how federal flood policy developed from these experiences. Chapter Three discusses the theoretical explanations as to why exacerbated disaster impacts are a result of policy actor influences. It also covers the literature involving present mitigation planning practices. Chapter Four describes the methods used in this study to comprehensively assess mitigation planning and programs. Chapter Five discusses the findings and implications derived from the comprehensive assessment of mitigation practices. Finally, Chapter Six provides a discussion of how current federal flood mitigation policy is influenced by growth machine dynamics as evidenced through these findings. It also provides insight for improving current practices and makes recommendations for further study.

Recommended CitationBailey, Linda Kay, "Exploring the barriers to effective federal flood mitigation in the Mississippi River region." (2017). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 2764.[Download](#)**INCLUDED IN**[Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#)**SHARE****Search**

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The Mississippi River is known for its epic floods and these destructive events led to the creation of levees along North America's longest river . Here, we count down the mightiest floods of the Mississippi River. April 1965 flood of the Upper Mississippi River. Wabasha, Minn., during the April 1965 flood. (Image credit: National Weather Service.) In 1965, flooding hit towns along the upper Mississippi, including Wabasha, Minn., pictured above. This was the second most severe flood in the lower Mississippi Basin in 56 years. Red River Landing in Louisiana flooded for 115 days. Damages totaled \$15.7 million. The Great Flood of 1844. The Mississippi River has been in a state of constant flux since flooding in 1844, as shown on the above image. (Image credit: NASA.) (NaturalNews) As record-breaking Mississippi River flood waters crested this morning near Memphis, Tenn., many other towns and cities along the river are awaiting record-breaking flood levels expected to arrive later this week and early next week. Many small ports along the Mississippi River have already been shut down as facilities and equipment are now completely submerged under water in many areas. At least three nuclear power facilities along the river are also threatened by record flooding, including two plants in Louisiana, and another in Mississippi. Midwest, Southern states brace for the worst as record flooding threatens region. EPA in cahoots with Ag industry to poison Gulf of Mexico with agricultural chemicals. Flood risk management seeks to reduce the risk from flood events to the people who are located in floodprone areas. Because there are no federal requirements for land-use restrictions or mitigation in the non-SFHA area, many owners and public officials erroneously assume that the absence of requirements for action can be equated with absence of risk, when in reality, the risk may actually be greater in some areas of the SFHA. During the 2011 flooding of the Mississippi River, USACE opened floodways near New Madrid Missouri to take the pressure off upstream and downstream levees in Illinois, Kentucky, and other locations in Missouri, and three floodways in Louisiana to relieve pressure on structures in the New Orleans area.