

River Discharge to the Coastal Ocean A Global Synthesis

Rivers provide the primary link between land and sea, historically discharging annually about 36 000 km³ of freshwater and more than 20 billion tons of solid and dissolved sediments to the global ocean. Together with tides, winds, waves, currents, and geology, rivers play a major role in determining the estuarine and coastal environment. The movement of freshwater and the distribution of river-derived sediments to the ocean have fundamental impacts on a wide variety of coastal environments, ranging from the Mississippi and Nile deltas, to coastal Siberia, to the Indonesian archipelago.

Utilizing the world's largest database – 1534 rivers that drain more than 85% of the landmass discharging into the global ocean – this book presents a detailed analysis and synthesis of the processes affecting the fluvial discharge of water, sediment, and dissolved solids. The ways in which climatic variation, episodic events, and anthropogenic activities – past, present, and future – affect the quantity and quality of river discharge are discussed in the final two chapters. The book contains more than 165 figures – many in full color – including global and regional maps. An extensive appendix presents the 1534-river database as a series of 44 tables that provide quantitative data regarding the discharge of water, sediment and dissolved solids. The appendix's 140 maps portray the morphologic, geologic, and climatic character of the watersheds. The complete database is also presented within a GIS-based package available online at www.cambridge.org/milliman.

River Discharge to the Coastal Ocean: A Global Synthesis provides an invaluable resource for researchers, professionals, and graduate students in hydrology, oceanography, geology, geomorphology, and environmental policy.

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John D. Milliman and Katherine L. Farnsworth
Frontmatter
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A Global Synthesis

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Contents

	<i>Foreword</i>	<i>page vii</i>		
1	Introduction	1		
	Rivers and the coastal ocean	1		
	About this book	1		
	Other global databases	3		
	Problems with existing data	7		
	Some final cautions	12		
2	Runoff, erosion, and delivery to the coastal ocean	13		
	Introduction	13		
	The hydrologic cycle and water discharge	13		
	Sediment: erosion and discharge	23		
	Dissolved solids	47		
	Summing up	61		
3	Temporal variations	70		
	Introduction	70		
	Short-term cycles and their atmospheric and oceanic drivers	70		
	Temporal variation in global discharge and runoff	85		
	Events	91		
4	Human activities and their impacts	115		
	Introduction	115		
	Watershed land-use	117		
	Shared rivers	130		
	River control	131		
	Case histories of four river systems	143		
	Summing up and projecting to the future	160		
	Appendices. Global river data base	165		
	Introduction	165		
	Tables and data categories	165		
	Appendix A North and Central America	170		
	Canada	171		
	United States (Contiguous)	176		
	United States (Alaska)	181		
	Hawaii plus Fiji	184		
	Mexico	186		
	Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras	190		
	Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama	193		
	Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico	196		
	Appendix B South America	199		
	Venezuela and Colombia	200		
	Ecuador and Peru	203		
	Chile, Argentina, Uruguay	207		
	Brazil	210		
	French Guiana, Suriname, Guyana	214		
	Appendix C Europe	217		
	Iceland	218		
	Norway, Sweden, Finland	221		
	Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland	225		
	Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium	228		
	Scotland, England, Ireland	231		
	France	235		
	Spain and Portugal	238		
	Italy	241		
	Albania, Croatia, Greece	245		
	Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine	248		
	Appendix D Africa	251		
	Sudan, Egypt, Libya	252		
	Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Western Sahara	255		
	Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia	258		
	Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo and Benin	261		
	Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo	264		
	Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola	267		
	Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique, Madagascar	270		
	Tanzania, Kenya, Somalia	275		
	Appendix E Eurasia	278		
	Turkey and Georgia	279		
	Lebanon and Israel	282		
	Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Iran	285		

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John D. Milliman and Katherine L. Farnsworth
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Appendix F Asia	289	Appendix G Oceania	312
Russia	290	Philippines	313
Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh	294	Indonesia and Papua New Guinea	316
Burma, Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam	298	Australia	324
China	302	New Zealand	329
Taiwan	305		
Japan and Korea	308	<i>References</i>	333
		Indexes	
		<i>Geographic Index: Bodies of Water</i>	367
		<i>Geographic Index: Rivers</i>	368
		<i>Geographic Index: Terrestrial</i>	379
		<i>Topical Index</i>	382

Foreword

We began this book primarily to collate into a single database relevant environmental data for rivers that discharge directly into the global ocean. As the book evolved, however, it began to take on a life of its own, and now contains, following a brief introductory chapter, three rather long chapters that attempt to give an overview to the environmental controls on fluvial discharge, short-term and longer-term temporal variations, and the impact of human activities on global rivers and their watersheds.

As geological oceanographers, we tend to view rivers differently than most hydrologists, geochemists or geomorphologists. While our data, analyses and interpretations of these data touch upon fundamental processes that govern fluvial runoff, physical, and chemical weathering, transport, dispersal and sedimentation, we do not explain in detail how fluvial systems work. We do, however, include a rather extensive bibliography that can help direct the interested reader to relevant literature.

In presenting such a large database – more than 1500 rivers – some of the data almost invariably will prove to be erroneous. We may have transposed numbers, and almost surely we have missed some key data sources. Where errors or omissions occur, we request the reader notify us – kindly, if possible – so that we can correct our mistakes and set the record straight.

There are many people whose help made this book possible. Because of the long time – more than three decades for JDM – over which we acquired and analyzed these data, we almost certainly have inadvertently omitted several (we hope not many) people, to whom we apologize. The Global River Data Centre (GRDC) and the US Geological Survey National Water Information System (NWIS) provided a large number of data used throughout the book. Charlie Vörösmarty's RIVDIS and Arctic RIMS databases were also very helpful, particularly in creating their various user-friendly internet databases. We also made liberal use of Michel Meybeck's global river database (Meybeck and Ragu, 1996), without which our discussion of chemical weathering in Chapter 2 would have been impossible.

Maria Michailova deserves special mention for the way in which she substantially clarified the extensive database for Russian rivers, many of which we either did not know or got wrong in our earlier attempt at a collation of global data (Milliman *et al.*, 1995). We also thank Yoshi Saito for help with data from Japan and China; Steve Smith for data from Mexico and southeast Asia; Yang Zuosheng, Wang

Ying, Wang Houjie, S. L. Yang and Kevin Xu (China); Jim Wilson (Ireland); Kristinn Einarsson (Iceland); Lea Kauppi and Pirkko Kauppila (Finland); Des Walling (England); Wolfgang Ludwig, Maria Snoussi and Albert Kettner (Mediterranean and Black Sea rivers); Guadalupe de la Lanza Espino (Mexico); Bastiaan Knoppers (Brazil); Pedro Depetris (Argentina); Juan Restrepo (Colombia); John Largier (South Africa); Pham Van Ninh (Vietnam); Murray Hicks and Berry Lyons (New Zealand); Kao Shuh-ji (Taiwan); Harish Gupta (India); Peter Harris (Australia); and Professor da Silva (Sri Lanka). Jeff Mount and Jon Warrick opened our eyes regarding California rivers.

There are many other colleagues and friends without whom parts of this book would have been difficult, if not impossible, to write. Phil Jones (Climate Research Unit, University of East Anglia) provided us with a 100-year precipitation database from which Kehui (Kevin) Xu was able to synthesize several maps used in Chapter 2. Kevin also provided us with a number of other maps that we used throughout Chapters 3 and 4. Jon Warrick, James Syvitski, Kao Shuh-ji, Noel Trustrum and Bob Gammish were extremely helpful in supplying us with photographs used in Chapters 3 and 4, as was Juan Restrepo in sharing with us his land-use maps of the Magdalena watershed. Mike Page's and Noel Trustrum's photo of a dammed lake (Fig. 3.55) is also gratefully acknowledged. The time spent with Leal Mertes on the Santa Clara provided much insight and many memories, and she would have almost certainly provided us with a startling cover for this book; we mourn her passing.

Additional conversations with and insights from James Syvitski, Des Walling, Michel Meybeck, and Jean-Luc Probst over the past 15 years also were extremely helpful. We thank them all for their continued friendship.

Bob Meade has been an admirable mentor and long-time steadfast friend. Our many conversations and insights over the years have proved particularly useful in helping us understand better the whys and wherefores of, as Bob would term it, potamology. Bob's critical reading of the first draft of this book proved invaluable; any omissions or errors in this book almost certainly occurred after his careful editing.

A particular heart-felt thanks goes to Marilyn Lewis, at the SMS/VIMS library, who, through the wonders of Interlibrary Loan, obtained for us many of the books and reprints that facilitated our access to the river literature.

Harold Burrell's graphic skills, coupled with his patience as we continually reconsidered and re-thought figures for the book, are gratefully acknowledged.

Many of the data and insights in this book stem directly or indirectly from research grants awarded by the US National Science Foundation (NSF), the US Office of Naval Research (ONR), and the US Naval Oceanographic Office (NAVO). We thank in particular Peggy Schexnayder

(NAVO) for her unfailing interest and encouragement over the 12 years that we spent working on this book.

Finally, JDM thanks Ann Milliman for enduring those many evenings when thoughts of rivers and this book took precedence over some of the more domestic and romantic aspects of our life. KLF thanks her family and friends for their patience and encouragement throughout the process.