



In The News

Current Events in Earth & Space Science

Summaries for the Classroom

Shrinking Mississippi River Levels

In the spring of 2011, the Mississippi River swelled to historic levels. In 2012, the record-low levels in sections of the Mississippi River have halted cargo traffic.

Articles to Share with Students

Los Angeles Times – Drought has Mississippi River Barge Traffic All Choked Up
<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-mississippi-river-20120902,0,6051251.story>

NASA Earth Observatory – Mississippi River Well Below Normal
<http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/IOTD/view.php?id=78903>

National Geographic News: Drought Reaches New Orleans; Hurricane Isaac Could Add Insult to Injury
<http://www.npr.org/2011/03/03/134222014/Fish-And-Wildlife-Service-Declares-Eastern-Cougar-Extinct>

ABC STORY & VIDEO: Drought Affecting Mississippi River Levels and Traffic
<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2012/08/drought-affecting-mississippi-river-levels-and-traffic/>

General Information

The Encyclopedia of Earth – Mississippi River
http://www.eoearth.org/article/Mississippi_River

USGS Daily Streamflow Conditions for Louisiana
<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/la/nwis/rt>

New York Times Topics – Drought
<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/science/topics/drought/index.html>

Questions for Classroom Discussion

- Some people are stating that the Mississippi River is experiencing a “drought.” Examine the definition of “drought” – is this an accurate use of the term?
- In July-August 2012, why is the water level low in the Mississippi River?
- How important are the water levels of the Mississippi River to commerce? Could the low levels have an effect on us in Pennsylvania? Explain.
- Is there any action humans can take to raise the water levels of the Mississippi River? Why/why not?
- If you had to get a shipment of grain from Memphis to New Orleans, and you could not ship the grain down the Mississippi River, how else might you deliver the grain? What might be the impact on Earth’s systems (biosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere, lithosphere) to this different form of shipping?

Tags

Mississippi River, drought

Big Ideas

From the Earth Science Literacy Principles

- Big Idea 1. Earth scientists use repeatable observations and testable ideas to understand and explain our planet. (1.2)
- Big Idea 8. Natural hazards pose risks to humans. (8.1, 8.3)
- Big Idea 9. Humans significantly alter the Earth. (9.4, 9.9)

From The Big Ideas in Earth and Space Science (ESBD)

- The Earth System (1)
- The Geosphere (3)
- The Hydrosphere (11)
- The Nature of Science (21, 24)

Compiled September 02, 2012, by L.A. Guertin