

Technical Plenary Address

A Regional Approach for a Sustainable Mekong

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Abstract

There are few places on earth where the combined consequences of climate change and development pressures will be as great for both biodiversity and people as in the Greater Mekong Region (GMR), which includes the Mekong Delta. The GMR boasts high and unique biodiversity in the midst of a large human population, which depends heavily on ecosystem services. Development pressures, unsustainable natural resource management, and other drivers are degrading these ecosystem services making it harder to achieve millennium development goals. Climate change is amplifying these pressures and its interaction with them makes this region, and the Delta in particular, one of the most vulnerable in the world. Integrated and coordinated responses are necessary to enhance the region's resilience to climate change and to maintain the vital ecosystem services upon which millions of lives and the region's economy depend. In this regard, I will argue that the most important adaptation is keeping the lower Mekong River's mainstem (and key tributaries) free flowing. I will also argue that a legal framework and mechanism is needed to ensure coordinated responses to climate change, protect the Basin's integrity, and promote appropriately cited sustainable hydropower development. WWF supports the creation of a regional climate change adaptation agreement to achieve these goals.