

SESSION GUIDE

THE MISSISSIPPI AS A LIVING RIVER: VISION, PROCESS, POLICY, PROJECTS SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1 – 2 PM PST

American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Conference on Landscape Architecture 2021, Nashville, TN



Our Future Coast (Credit: SCAPE 2019)

SESSION OVERVIEW

How can we work at the scale of the larger landscape that sustains us? How can landscape architects, planners, policy makers and funders convene to act at the scale of the climate and biodiversity crisis? This session will describe a set of convenings, scientific white papers, and design studies that aspire to address in part the regional challenge of America's river, or the Mississippi. We will discuss the current physical state the river today, how indigenous culture shaped it over centuries, and learn of the climate threats to come. Today, the entire river system is imperiled. Hidden behind levees, except when they burst in dramatic and deadly ways, the river is out of sight, out of mind. Increased rainfall and climate change are exacerbating threats to the river, and the industries, farms, towns, and communities along it. It is a spectacular natural wonder, which is also of paramount importance to the ecological and social health of the nation. What is the role of landscape practitioners to envision an alternative future for the Mississippi and how can we advance a paradigm of green infrastructure and environmental justice? How can we marshal science, design and policy toward critical vision and action?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss how climate adaptation, floodplain restoration, habitat and economic recovery can intersect across the Mississippi River system at different sites and scales.
2. Explore the river history, ecology and social context. Evaluate climate change impacts both in the Upper and Lower Mississippi.
3. Discuss the opportunities and constraints of green infrastructure within an expanded floodplain.
4. Expand awareness about the global and local actors, institutions, stakeholders, and opportunities for overall ecosystem improvement and rewilding.
5. Outline the most urgent needs, discuss mapping and design framework as well as tools to insure participation and engagement.

SESSION STRUCTURE

Introduction 3-5 minutes **Kate Orff, FASLA / SCAPE and Columbia University**

Presentation 1 20 minutes **David Muth / National Wildlife Foundation**

- Brief history of the river, social life and ecosystems
- Review of climate change and its impacts both in the Upper and Lower Mississippi, in particular increased riverine flooding and delta land loss.
- Concepts for Change
 - Prioritizing Green vs. Gray
 - Improving Agricultural Policies and Practices
 - Improving River and Floodplain Management
 - Improving Habitat for Wildlife and Biodiversity through Restoration
 - Continuing Restoration of the Mississippi River Delta
 - Strengthening Climate Response
 - Advancing Equity and Justice for Vulnerable Communities

Presentation 2 15 minutes **Kristin Tracz / Walton Family Foundation**

- The need for a vision for thriving landscapes in the change process
- Overview of the Foundation's Mississippi River Initiative
- Discussion of the role of philanthropy and foundations to unite businesses and environmental interests
- The promise of meaningful environmental restoration
 - Short term – job creation in America's heartland
 - Long term – protecting the region's economy
 - The need to engage vulnerable communities

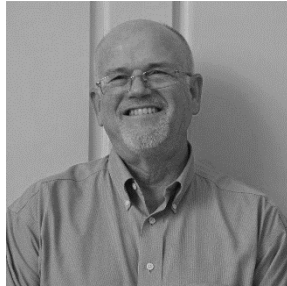
Conclusion 10 minutes **Kate Orff**

Reporting on Mississippi Vision Studio

- Mapping & Design Framework Overview
- Call to Action and Participation
- Next Steps

Q&A 10 minutes Audience Q & A

PANELISTS



David Muth
National Wildlife Foundation

David Muth is a New Orleans native who has spent a lifetime in the Mississippi River Delta and on the Louisiana coast studying its geology, ecology, plants, wildlife, history and culture. He is an authority on the birds of coastal Louisiana, having served as president of the Louisiana Ornithological Society, Chairman of the Louisiana Bird Records Committee, Regional Editor for North American Birds and Louisiana Editor for the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count. He worked for 30 years with the National Park Service at Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve in south Louisiana, eventually managing its natural and cultural resource programs.



Kristin Tracz
Walton Family Foundation

Kristin manages the foundation's Mississippi River initiative, which seeks to support healthy soils, clean water and a restored and resilient Mississippi River system. The promise of meaningful environmental restoration — both in the short term by creating jobs and in the long term by protecting the region's economy — creates an opportunity to unite business and environmental interests. Prior to joining the foundation, Kristin was a program officer for the Blue Moon Fund and an energy policy specialist for the Mountain Association, a community development financial institution in Kentucky. Kristin has a master's degree in environmental management from the Yale School of the Environment, and a bachelor's degree in political and social thought from the University of Virginia.

MODERATOR



Kate Orff, RLA, FASLA
Founder and Principal, SCAPE
Professor, Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP)

Kate Orff, RLA, FASLA, is the Founding Principal of SCAPE. She focuses on retooling the practice of landscape architecture relative to the uncertainty of climate change and creating spaces to foster social life, which she has explored through publications, activism, research, and projects. She is known for leading complex, creative, and collaborative work processes that advance broad environmental and social prerogatives. In 2019, Kate was elevated to the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Council of Fellows—one of the highest honors bestowed on landscape architects practicing in the U.S.

Kate was awarded the prestigious MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 2017, the first given in the field of landscape architecture. In 2019, she accepted a National Design Award from the Cooper Hewitt, National Design Museum, on behalf of SCAPE, and was named a Hero of the Harbor by the Waterfront Alliance. She was a 2012 United States Artist Fellow, dubbed an Elle Magazine "Planet Fixer," and has been profiled and interviewed extensively for publications including The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Economist, National Geographic, The New Yorker and more.

REFERENCES

- Source 1 Our Future Coast project website
<https://www.scapestudio.com/projects/our-future-coast/>
- Source 2 Our Future Coast project page on the SCAPE website
<https://www.scapestudio.com/projects/our-future-coast/>
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