



Coastal Areas

Huang He Delta, China

The Huang He (Yellow River) is the muddiest river on Earth and is China's second longest river, running 5,475 km (3,395 miles) from eastern Tibet to the Bohai Sea. The Huang He's yellow color is caused by its tremendous load of sediment, composed primarily of mica, quartz, and feldspar particles. The sediment enters the water as the river carves its way through the highly erodable loess plateau in north-central China. (Loessial soil is called *huang tu*, or "yellow earth," in Chinese.) Centuries of sediment deposition and dike

building along the river's course has caused it to flow above the surrounding farmland in some places, making flooding a critically dangerous problem. Where the Huang He flows into the ocean, sediments are continuously deposited in the river delta, where they gradually build up over time. Between 1979 and 2000—as these satellite images show—the delta of the Huang He expanded dramatically. Several hundred square kilometres of newly formed land were added to China's coast during this period.