

The Floating Forest Theory Sinks
By Greg Neyman
© Answers In Creation



First Published 17 Jan 2003
Answers In Creation Website
www.answersincreation.org/floating.htm

One explanation used by young-earth proponents to explain that all coal seams formed during the Flood is the concept of the floating forest (answersingenesis.org/home/area/Magazines/docs/cen_v18n1_forests.asp), which can be found on the Answers in Genesis website, written by Carl Wieland. There are actually four articles on the web that we will consider when discussing the floating forest. The other three are:

“Too Much Coal for a Young Earth,” by Gerhard Schönknecht and Siegfried Scherer¹
“Coal Beds and Noah's Flood,” by Andrew Snelling²
“Patterns of Ocean Circulation Over the Continents During Noah’s Flood,” by John Baumgardner and Daniel Barnette³

First let’s look at the possibility of floating forests existence. From the evidence presented, I can see no reason why they can't exist. It is certainly plausible that there may have been water-borne forests in the past. That's not to say there are not logical problems with this theory. One is the claim that all plants with a radial root pattern are water-borne plants. One only needs to look at the Sequoia tree of California to dispense with this statement. The tallest of trees in the world (up to 300 feet) has a radial root pattern. In fact, its roots only go into the ground vertically a distance of 6 feet!

However, let's be nice for the time being and agree that the floating forest idea is possible.

This floating forest idea is used to explain that the 230+ coal beds in the Ruhr district of Germany, scattered throughout 4,000 meters of strata, came to exist during the 375 days of Noah's flood. The geological explanation put forward by old-earth creationists is that these beds formed over millions of years, as the sea levels fluctuated, causing the land to be covered, then uncovered with water repetitively. However, the young-earth explanation is with the floating forests, which in the cataclysmic event of the Flood, were rapidly buried, and covered with sediment. (See "Too Much Coal...") Unfortunately, this theory does not wash.

Think about the model. The Flood starts, and the floating forest over Germany is sank by the turbulent waters. Give it a day, in which the material that covers the flooded trees is deposited, and then another floating forest has been brought into place by the currents, and it sinks in the same spot the next day! This is repeated 230 times, up to a thickness of 4,000 meters! So imagine this picture...you have 230 floating forests, all lined up in a row, awaiting their chance to sink in the exact same spot, and then be rapidly covered

over with sediment before the next forest sinks. This process all happens in about 375 days! Even assuming it happened, where did the sediment come from?

This is explained on the creation science website Answers in Genesis website by John Baumgardner and Daniel Barnette in their article referenced above. They show that based on their calculations, the waters of the flood covering a sphere (earth) would move with a velocity (current) of up to 87 meters per second, which they claim is more than enough to cause erosion to create these beds. These currents are centered over the continental masses, and compressed towards the western margins. I cannot confirm their calculations, but it introduces two obvious errors that don't require a rocket scientist to figure out.

What are the errors? First, if you have the water turbulence they calculated, then all the floating forests would have immediately sank! You no longer have the neat and orderly progression of 230 forests into the area of Germany to create the coal fields. In fact, by their model, if you look at the coal fields of the world, they should all be only one coal seam thick, and not multiple seams like we actually see. And while their theory would account for thin seams, it does nothing to explain a 100-foot thick coal seam, which would require many forests together!

Second, if they did manage to float, they would all be forced by these currents to one location, opposite the land mass. This would be the point of the least current, thus there would be no forces there to cause them to sink. Given that the circulation over the northern continents was counterclockwise, and clockwise over the southern, they could even possibly have circled the globe, as these forces would send currents around the equator.

Third, remember we have 87 meter per second currents. At that speed, none of the fine rock material would be able to settle on the ocean floor...it would stay in suspension in the water. In fact, it would settle out opposite the continents, in the deep ocean basins, but here, there are no turbulent forces which would cause the forests to sink, thus you would not be creating coal beds there.

If you wanted the coal beds to form over the continents, here is what must happen. God would have to sink a forest with the turbulent water, then calm the water and make it still for a day, so the sediment would sink to the bottom, then re-start the current to bring in the next forest to sink, sink it, stop the current, etc., etc. Sure, God could have done it, but there's no logical reason to.

Furthermore, with rapid burial as they suggest, you would see perfectly fossilized trees in the rock beds above the coal, because the rapid burial would preserve the original state of the trees. Of course, the current would have stripped away the leaves and small branches, but there would still be many of these petrified trees left.

One final thought on the floating forest. They would have to follow the ocean currents. They probably would not have survived more than a few years, as the current

took each one into the Arctic or Antarctic to freeze. And, if they existed, then some must have floated into the polar regions and been frozen. Has any explorations of the earth's polar caps discovered a floating forest frozen in the ice? Not that I know of.

Some may try to explain this away by saying the forests were anchored to shore, and thus did not circulate with the currents. This however introduces three more problems. First, the waves would occasionally break them free, and they would float off...hence we would find some frozen ones in the polar regions. Second, I seriously doubt that you could get a tree to stand one-hundred feet vertically in the air, while being pounded by the surf! You don't need a computer model to prove it...its just not possible. Third, the high velocity currents are over the continents, thus they would have been battered and broken apart, and scattered to the currents, and thus it would not be capable of being deposited to make a coal bed.

The creation science article "Coal Beds and Noah's Flood" by Andrew Snelling attempts to show that it is possible for all the world's coal to have been produced from the plants which existed at the time of Noah's flood? Even if he is correct, it doesn't matter, because there is no model by which it can be laid down to create 230+ separate coal beds in one 4,000 meter thick strata of rock! Therefore, the calculations in this article are meaningless, as are the coal volume calculations of the "Too Much Coal" mentioned above.

Conclusion

There is no possible way that the coal beds of the Ruhr district in Germany were created by the Flood of Noah. If there was a global flood of Noah, then the supposed floating forests could not have formed the pattern of multiple layers of coal that we see in Germany. In addition to Germany, one must also consider other areas of the world with multiple seams divided by other rock layers. Concerning thickness, even being generous, it is hard to imagine that a floating forest would yield no thicker seams than 5 meters, yet there are many coal seams exceeding this thickness.

Even assuming Wieland's discussion of the tree composition (roots, appendages, etc) is correct, it doesn't provide much support for his argument. If you can't deposit them in the strata the way they are seen today, his conclusions are meaningless.

The only logical conclusion is that coal seams were laid down over millions of years, just like the geologists have told us all along.