

ESTUARY, SHIPS, NATURE, HUMANS: CAN WE LIVE TOGETHER?

A true story of the Scheldt estuary

Sven Smolders¹, Stefaan Ides³, Yves Plancke^{2,3}, Patrick Meire¹ and Stijn Temmerman¹

¹ Antwerp University (UA), Department of Biology, Universiteitsplein 1, 2610 Wilrijk, Belgium
E-mail: sven.smolders@ua.ac.be

² Flanders Hydraulics Research, Berchemlei 115, 2140 Antwerp, Belgium

³ Antwerp Port Authority, Havenhuis, Entrepotkaai 1, 2000 Antwerp, Belgium

Introduction

Some basic questions about the Scheldt estuary:

- The estuary is a way for storm surges to reach the hinterland. Are we protected enough?
- The estuary is almost entirely protected as NATURA 2000 area. Can port expansion on one of the crowdiest shipping ways go hand in hand with nature preservation?
- Larger and larger container ships are visiting the port of Antwerp. Has the estuary reached its limits yet?

The Western Scheldt is one of the crowdiest shipping ways in the world. In 2011 the port of Antwerp was visited by 15.240 seagoing ships and 59.428 barge calls.

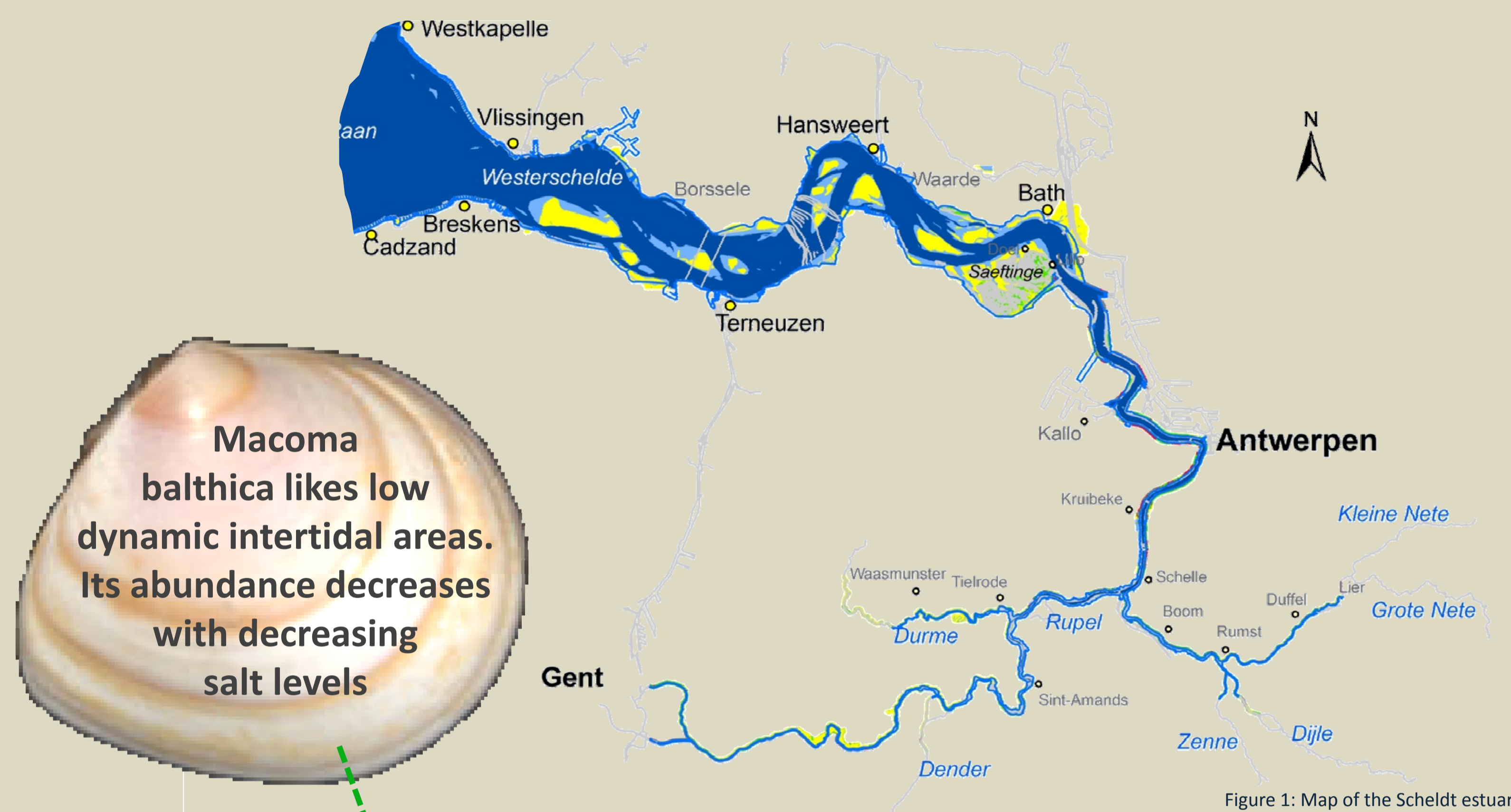
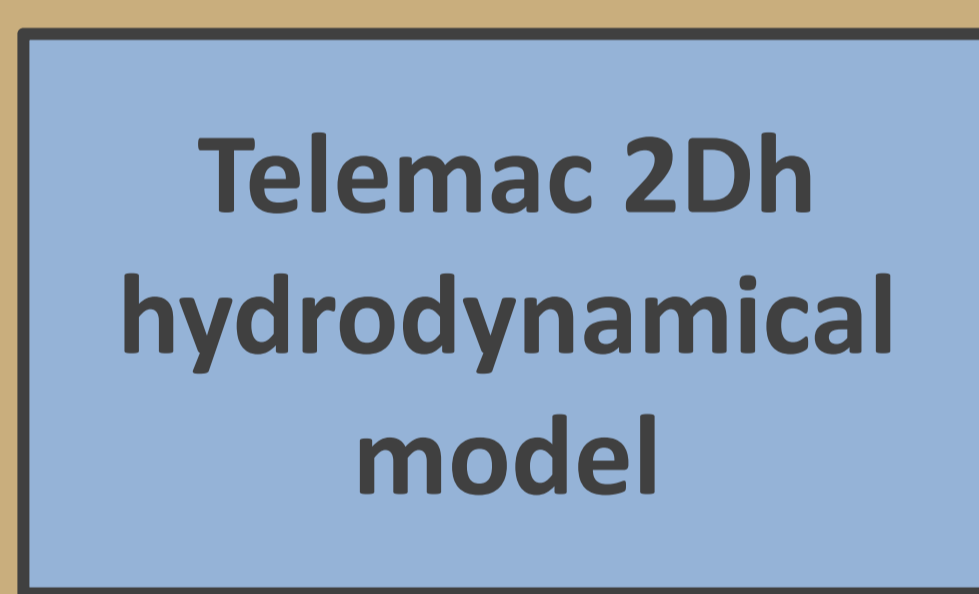


Figure 1: Map of the Scheldt estuary

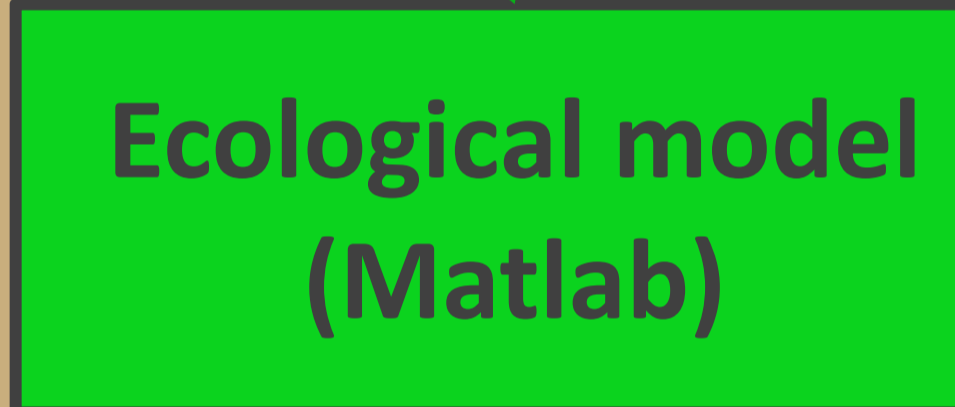
Material and methods

Morphological scenario X:

- River discharges
- Water level sea
- Bathymetry



- Salinity (t)
- Flow velocity (t)
- Depth (t)
- Water level (t)
- Sediment D₅₀



Potential habitat map per benthos species



Sedimentation/erosion map per scenario

Morphology of system

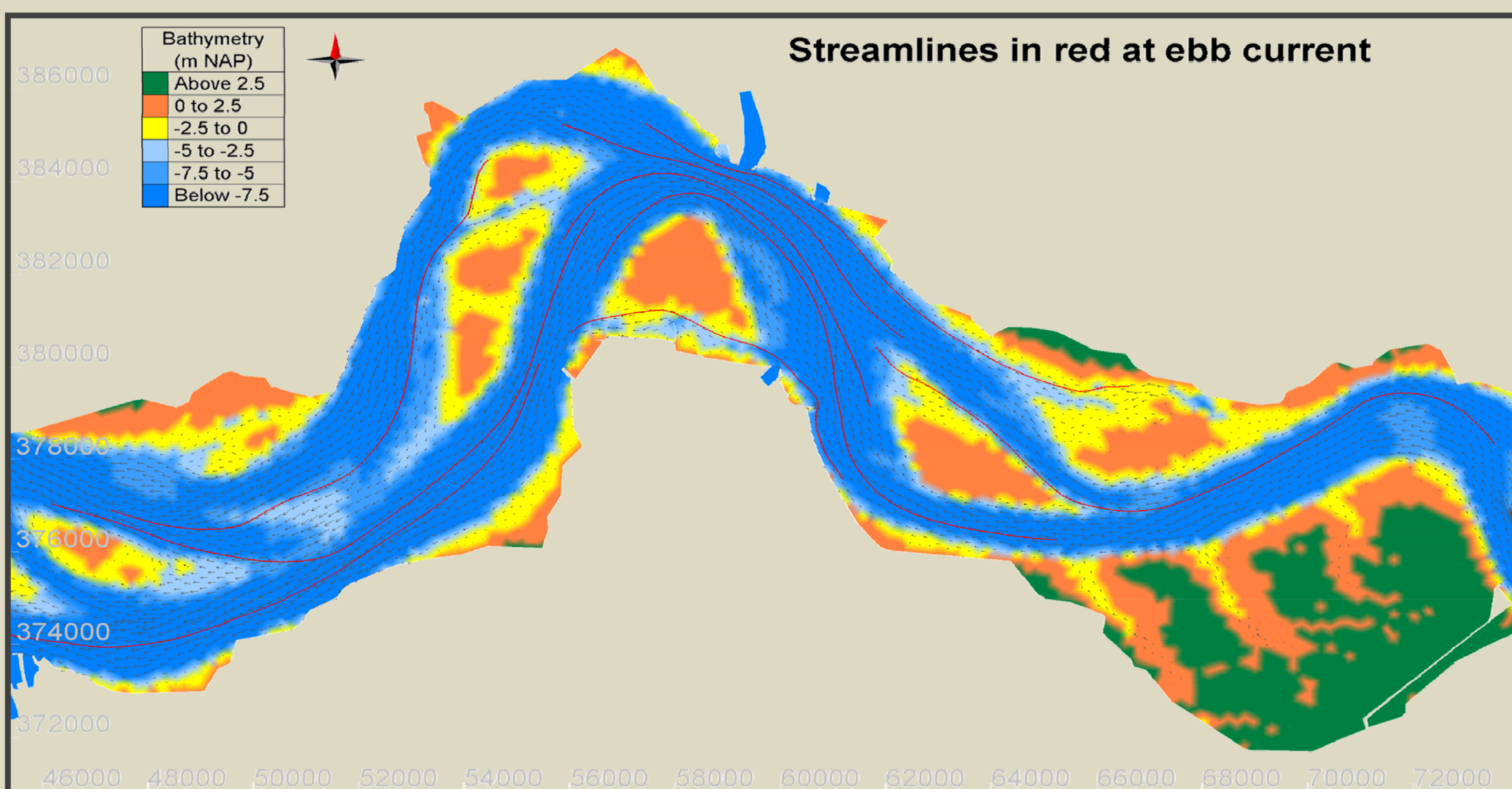


Figure 2: Flow velocity field in area around Hansweert showing some streamlines

Results and discussion

Flood defense / Safety

Based on water level results of different scenarios the risk on flooding can be estimated

Port accessibility / Navigation channel

Based on sedimentation and erosion patterns for different scenarios the flow conditions in the navigation channel can be optimized to improve scouring on sills and decreasing maintenance dredging

Ecological value of the system

Increase or decrease of potential habitat for a specific morphological scenario up to species level. Difference maps between current situation and different scenarios are made to estimate evolution

Conclusions

The morphology of the system that ensures a **WIN-WIN-WIN** situation between safety, accessibility and ecology can be found based on the specific needs of the system (dictated by its partners: ports, nature, humans).

Living together means mutual respect for each other and accommodation space for each partner.