



The Environmental Impact of Building Dams

Aswan Dam

The Aswan dam, built on the Nile River, was an enormous feat of engineering and planning. Lake Nasser was created as a result of the flooding of the dam's catchment area.

Some important cultural heritage sites were taken apart, and rebuilt at Abu Simbel in order to avoid them being flooded by the project. Other sites were not saved and remain under the water.



The Gordon Dam

Gordon River in Tasmania, Australia.
Built in 1974

The Gordon Dam was built for the purpose of providing hydroelectric supply. Water is fed down a 183 m drop to turn turbines that are located under the ground below the dam wall.

A proposed second dam on the Gordon River, the Franklin Dam, was never built due to strong opposition from community and environmental groups. The Tasmanian Wilderness Society ran a campaign from 1976 -1983 to save the pristine wilderness from environmental damage.

The leader of the Tasmanian Wilderness Society, Dr Bob Brown, later became a member of the Tasmanian Parliament, an Australian Senator and the Parliamentary Leader of the Australian Greens political party.



Murray River

The Murray River flows for over 2500 km across eastern Australia to its outlet on the coast in South Australia. It forms part of the border between New South Wales and Victoria.

During the early to mid 1900s, a series of dams, locks and weirs were built on the river. These disrupted the natural flow of the river and allowed fresh water to be available for irrigation to Australia's largest food growing region.

Salt is found naturally in soil and dissolves into river systems. These salts usually flow along the river and out to sea, keeping salinity levels in the river stable. However, reduced water flow and runoff from agriculture has significantly increased salinity levels in the Murray River. This has greatly impacted the environment as well as agriculture.



Three Gorges Dam

Yangtze River in Hubei Province, China.
Completed in 2012.

The Three Gorges Dam includes one of the world's largest hydroelectric plants and a system of locks for shipping along river.

More 1.2 million people were displaced in order to build the dam. This resulted in 13 cities, 140 towns, 1,350 villages being flooded by the dam's reservoir which is over 600 km long.

Scientists have concerns about the dam's impact on the environment and the safety of people living near it.

Landslides have occurred in nearby regions, thought to be triggered by changes in water level in the dam.





The Nile River



The Murray River



Choose one of these rivers for further research.

Find out more about the environmental impact of building dams on these rivers.

Three Gorges Dam



The Gordon River

