

CHALLENGE C

Destruction of the rivers' ecosystem, including water pollution, unsustainable management of water resources and impact of global climate change.

Unsustainable management of transboundary water resources influences the hydrology system of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, and causes harm to the marine ecosystem of their tributaries. Agriculture productivity in the Mesopotamian region has decreased as a result of water pollution, and the negative effects of climate change on the water resources of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers are becoming more apparent. Reduced precipitation and the increased demand for water is an urgent concern for this semi-arid region. The water ecosystem in the Tigris and Euphrates basin should be protected from all types of pollution with support from local communities.

Tigris-Euphrates River System – A Status Report

Abstract

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The ecosystem that makes up the Tigris-Euphrates River Basins provide the foundation upon which the biological diversity, agricultural productivity, fisheries production, human health, and cultural resources of four riparian states (Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq) are based. This ecosystem also supports the marine resources of the Gulf and affects countries such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. But the health and vitality of the Tigris-Euphrates River Ecosystems are greatly impacted by water pollution, unsustainable management of the basins hydrological systems, and global climate change. This paper provides a brief overview of the status and some of the key issues impacting the Tigris-Euphrates Ecosystem today from the perspectives of each of the riparian states, the shared cross-border issues that impact this ecosystem, as well as how its overall health influences conditions in the Gulf. Actions necessary to protect the integrity and healthy functions of this ecosystem are discussed with an emphasis on solutions that can be taken at the local, community level.

We invite activists, scholars, journalists and others with an interest in the ecosystem of the Tigris-Euphrates basin to join us in exploring various opportunities for addressing the unsustainable management of the water resources in the region.

Questions to be addressed include:

- What are the varied threats to water quality and river health in the Tigris-Euphrates Basins? What is the current status of the key species and important taxa that are unique to these basins and what threats do they face? What issues are specific to the upper vs the lower basin and the Gulf?
- How is climate change impacting the basin today and what will be the long-term trends in the region if action isn't taken to address global climate change and other basin-wide threats to the ecosystem? What will be the impact on biodiversity? Agriculture? Human health? Riparian functions?
- How is the current management of the Tigris-Euphrates Basins impacting its health and ecosystem functions? What changes in water management at the local, national and regional levels are needed to restore and protect the Basins?
- How can local communities expose the many and varied threats to water quality in the Tigris-Euphrates basin? What tools do they need? What allies can they reach out to?

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<http://www.savethetigris.org/international-mesopotamian-water-forum>