

# Aral sea recovery national geographic aral sea story

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**What is the story of the Aral Sea?** In 1960 the Aral Sea in Central Asia was the planet's fourth largest lake. Today it has almost disappeared; a victim of massive, water hungry, Soviet created irrigation schemes, that continue to extract too much water from its vital source rivers far upstream.

**What is the story of the Aral Sea's disappearance?** In the 1920s, the Soviet government began to drain the sea for irrigation of cotton and other cash crops. By the 1960s, it shrunk by half; those crops thrived. By 1987, the Aral's level was so low it split into two bodies of water: the northern and southern seas, in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, respectively.

**Is the Aral Sea making a comeback?** Further efforts have focused on reducing the water's mineralization in the Aral Sea, a move that has helped return more than 20 fish species to its northern part Aizada Arystanbek (2021, June 17). Aral Sea Restoration Efforts to Include Planting Million-Hectare Saxaul Forest. The Astana Times.

**Is there anything left of the Aral Sea?** Today, the Aral Sea does not exist. There are, instead, two distinct bodies of water: the North Aral Sea (also known as the "Small Sea," in Kazakhstan) and the South Aral Sea (in Uzbekistan).

**What is the tragedy of the Aral Sea?** Not only was all this water being diverted into canals at the expense of the Aral Sea supply, but the majority of it was being soaked up by the desert and blatantly wasted (between 25% and 75% of it, depending on the time period). The water level in the Aral Sea started drastically decreasing from the 1960s onward.

**Is the Aral Sea refilling?** The Aral Sea has been dwindling for decades, but one part of the lake is now growing again.

**Who caused the Aral Sea disaster?** The seeds of the Aral Sea basin water crisis were planted in 1959 when the Soviet Union picked Central Asia to serve as its cotton supplier.

**What primarily caused the disappearance of the Aral Sea?** The demise of the Aral Sea in central Asia was caused primarily by the diversion of the inflowing Amu Dar'ya and Syr Dar'ya rivers to provide irrigation water for local croplands.

**What happened to the people after the Aral Sea shrank?** As the Aral Sea has dried up, fisheries and the communities that depended on them collapsed. The increasingly salty water became polluted with fertilizer and pesticides. The blowing dust from the exposed lakebed, contaminated with agricultural chemicals, became a public health hazard.

**Is it possible to fix the Aral Sea?** Despite countless (failed) attempts to restore the Aral Sea, much of the region continues to suffer from extreme environmental degradation and the social and economic repercussions that follow. Forty million people live in the Aral Sea basin and are exposed to life-threatening consequences of the sea's desiccation.

**How long will it take to restore the Aral Sea?** Redirecting water from the Volga, Ob and Irtysh rivers to restore the Aral Sea to its former size in 20–30 years at a cost of US\$30–50 billion.

**Are there fish in the Aral Sea?** During those decades, flounder was the only fish that could survive the high-salinity North Aral Sea. But after the Kokaral Dam was finished, the average salinity dropped from 30 grams to 8 grams per liter, prompting the return of almost two dozen freshwater species through the Syr Darya river.

**How can the Aral Sea be realistically rehabilitated?** Restoration of the Aral Sea level must undoubtedly rely on increasing its inflow and, accordingly, water saving in the middle reaches become essential. Agriculture currently accounts for more than 85% of the water withdrawal from the Aral Sea River basins (CAWATERinfo, 2018).

**What is the 4th largest inland water mass in the world?** The Aral Sea stands at the boundary between Kazakhstan to the north and Uzbekistan to the south. It was once a large saltwater lake of Central Asia and the world's fourth largest body of inland water.

**Do people live in the Aral Sea?** The Aral has nearly disappeared, and the large communities it once sustained are simply no more. But a scattering of small towns and villages remain. Some have as few as 10 people. And there, they say, there's still a bit of life beyond the sea.

**What did Stalin do to the Aral Sea?** Starting in the 1920s and continuing under Stalin, Soviet managers decided that the Central Asian steppes crossed by those rivers were the right place to jump start a cotton industry. Using dams and irrigation canals, the water for the cotton was diverted from the rivers that fed the Aral Sea.

**Which sea dried up due to human activities?** While the Aral Sea has indeed shrunk, Lake Baikal, the world's deepest and oldest freshwater lake, has not substantially dried or shrunk. Therefore, the correct answer is 1 – only the Aral Sea has shrunk immensely due to human activities.

**What would be the best way to replenish the water in the Aral Sea?** Raising the dyke walls by another four metres would help to keep an additional 15 billion cubic metres of water in the North Aral Sea, he adds. This would extend the area covered by the sea, which currently measures 800sq km (300 sq miles), by another 400sq km (150 sq miles).

**Is the Aral Sea actually a saline lake?** Until a few decades ago, the Aral Sea (salt lake of oceanic origin), was the fourth largest lake (sea) in the planet's surface. Today, the Aral Sea has reduced its surface area by 75%, and in only a little more than 10% of water is visible through satellites, while the remaining 90% is all sand.

**How deep was the Aral Sea?** The level of the water surface of the Aral Sea in natural conditions was 53 m above the level of the world ocean, which is almost 80m higher than the level of the Caspian Sea. It was 428 km long and 234 km wide, with a maximum depth of 69m and a volume of 1064 km<sup>3</sup>.

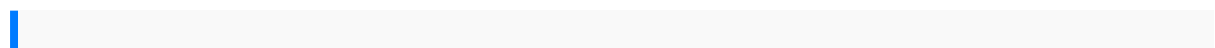
**Is the Aral Sea salt or fresh?** It is an immense lake, a body of fresh water, although that particular description of its contents might now be more a figure of speech than practical fact.

**What caused the Aral Sea to dry up?** The world's fourth largest lake in 1960, the Aral Sea has already shrunk to half its former size - a result of unsustainable cotton cultivation that began less than 40 years ago. But though the sea itself can no longer be saved, its toxic salt plains have paradoxically given rise to a new spirit in the region.

**Who is responsible for the Aral Sea disaster?** After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, the new states of the region, assumed the responsibility for the Aral situation.

**Why is the Aral Sea important?** Earlier, the Aral Sea acted as a climate regulator for the region: it softened cold Siberian winds in winters and acted as a conditioner lowering heat in summer months. The sea's shrinkage has resulted in drier and shorter summers, and in longer and colder winters.

**What happened to the Aral Sea for kids?** The drying up of the Aral Sea resulted mainly from overuse of its two main tributaries—the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya—for irrigation. The waters of those two rivers were diverted to new farmland in the region and thus no longer reached the Aral Sea.



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