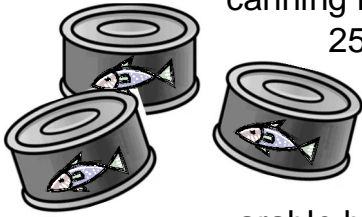


# The Aral Sea: An Un-natural Disaster

The Aral Sea used to be the \_\_\_\_\_ lake in the world. Thousands of \_\_\_\_\_ made their living from the sea. There were so \_\_\_\_\_ fish that a local canning factory \_\_\_\_\_ fish around the world. \_\_\_\_\_ traveled 250 miles from busy northern port cities to southern ports.



In the 1950s, the Soviet Union needed more \_\_\_\_\_. But most of their land was not arable because it was too cold and frozen . or too hot and \_\_\_\_\_. But there were two large \_\_\_\_\_ flowing into the southern deserts. Soviet leaders decided to use river water for \_\_\_\_\_. They built hundreds of miles of \_\_\_\_\_ into the desert over the next 20 years.



These rivers were fed by (1) some \_\_\_\_\_ . not that much . and by (2) springtime \_\_\_\_\_ from the western Himalayas (Hindu Kush mountain range). And they fed their water into the Aral Sea.

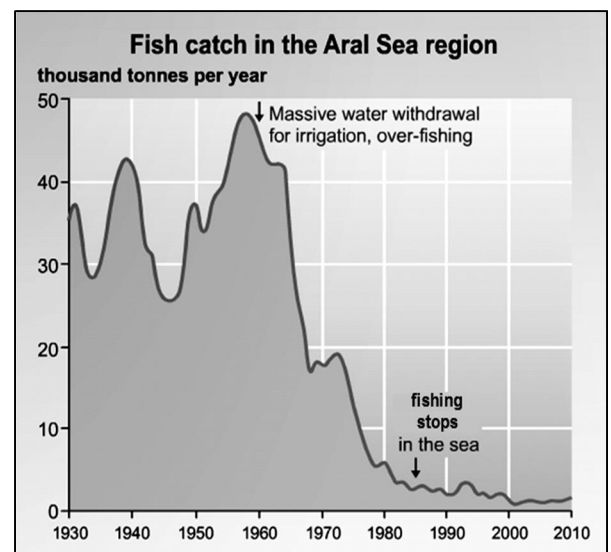
The longest irrigation canal is \_\_\_\_\_ miles long. It takes water out of the \_\_\_\_\_ river . the Amu Darya. But all along the way, \_\_\_\_\_ canals drain water for fields along the river. The \_\_\_\_\_ river (the Syr Darya) is \_\_\_\_\_ drained for irrigation. The main crop grown was \_\_\_\_\_, which brought \_\_\_\_\_ into the Soviet Union as the cotton was exported around the world. Cotton is also a very %<sub>oo</sub> \_\_\_\_\_+crop . requiring LOTS of water.



## CONSEQUENCES

So much water is pulled out of both rivers that \_\_\_\_\_ water makes it to the Aral Sea. Fishermen tried to dig deeper \_\_\_\_\_ out to the sea to keep their boats connected to what was left of the sea. But the sea disappeared \_\_\_\_\_ than they could dig the channels. By 2010, the Aral Sea had almost \_\_\_\_\_. All that was left was two to three \_\_\_\_\_ lakes.

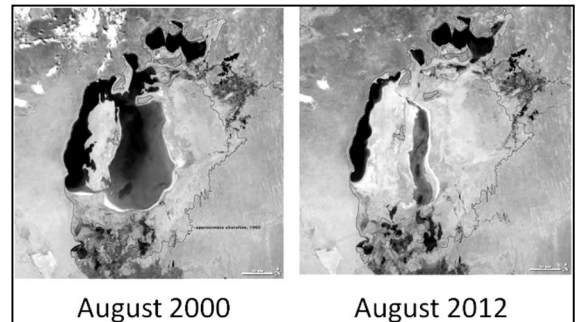
Aralsk, once a busy port city, no longer has



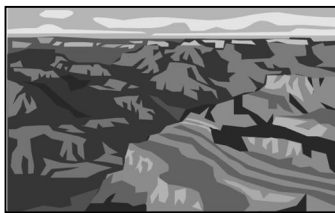
enough \_\_\_\_\_ for ships. Like other inland seas, the Aral Sea is \_\_\_\_\_. As the sea shrunk, salt concentrations became **extremely** \_\_\_\_\_. This killed most fish. The fish canning \_\_\_\_\_ is abandoned. Much of what used to be sea is littered with \_\_\_\_\_, rusting fishing \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ cause sickness from breathing in dust and salt particles. Chemicals sprayed on crops \_\_\_\_\_ the air and run off into the small amount of river water still left.

### TAKING CHARGE OF WHAT YOU CAN

\_\_\_\_\_ of the Aral Sea was in Kazakhstan, but Uzbekistan & Turkmenistan are taking \_\_\_\_\_ of the water. So in 2005, Kazakhstan started building a \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ the northern part of the Aral Sea from the rest. The dam holds in water that comes from the \_\_\_\_\_ river (Syr Darya). Kazakhstan saw improvements with \_\_\_\_\_. The sea is getting \_\_\_\_\_ to Aralsk every year. \_\_\_\_\_ are even returning to the sea. But the \_\_\_\_\_ part of the sea keeps disappearing.



### Could this happen to waterways in the United States?



Scientists tell us that the Colorado River has existed for 6 million years. It is powerful enough to carve out the \_\_\_\_\_. But \_\_\_\_\_ use its water to irrigate our western \_\_\_\_\_ and to provide water to desert towns. For \_\_\_\_\_ years now, the Colorado River has been dying out before it even reaches the \_\_\_\_\_. The water is used up before that.

And what about our \_\_\_\_\_? Their water level is dropping. Billions of gallons a year are taken for irrigation and general water use.



And what about \_\_\_\_\_? We already have water rationing, even sometimes in the winter. And different groups are in \_\_\_\_\_ battles trying to claim the same water.



**"When the \_\_\_\_\_ is dry, we finally learn the \_\_\_\_\_ of water."**

-- Benjamin Franklin