



WORLD FRESHWATER INITIATIVE & WORLD WATER MAP

FRESHWATER IS VITAL TO LIFE on our planet — for humans and the natural world. Understanding and conserving freshwater underpins much of the National Geographic Society’s mission: to illuminate and protect the wonder of our world. Yet in many places around the world, humans’ unsustainable use of freshwater is exceeding our renewable supplies.

In 2022, the Society launched the World Freshwater Initiative to study and communicate emerging freshwater shortages around the world and to inspire sustainable action. The five-year Initiative will launch impactful new projects in freshwater conservation, education, and storytelling. Central to this Initiative is the World Water Map, which visualizes and accounts for every drop of water in the world and highlights areas and root causes of critically unsustainable demand.

World Water Map

The World Water Map was created by the National Geographic Society, in partnership with Utrecht University and Esri. The Map provides audiences with a geovisualization of global freshwater supply and demand; identifies water gap hotspots where demand is critically exceeding supply; and analyzes the biggest drivers of water demand by sector.

This Map will allow audiences to visualize water use in their communities, and will answer questions like:

- What’s the water demand for agricultural, industrial, and household use? How can we use this information to have a more sustainable relationship with water?
- How will the water gap affect people, wildlife, and nature?
- What are the biggest issues affecting my local watershed?

The Map is built on more than 40 years of hydrological data collated by Utrecht University, and will be updated periodically to monitor changes in water availability and demand.

Combining Science, Storytelling, and Water Literacy

Through the World Freshwater Initiative, the Society is supporting storytellers, scientists, and educators to analyze, document, and alert audiences to emerging water scarcity issues — and show how shortages affect people, communities, wildlife, and nature. Their work will be incorporated into the Map to help bring the data to life, promote water literacy, inspire sustainable practices, and tell stories of hope and community-based solutions.

For more information, please visit natgeo.org/freshwater.

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