**To Dam or Not to Dam?**

**Individual Assignment:** As you read / watch the following information, make a list of pros and cons of damming a river. Use detailed information from the sources provided.

**Dams**

When we talk about damming a river - there are always two or more sides, opinions and points of view. For example, dams have been built all over the world to solve water shortage problems (for household use and irrigation for farming), to make hydropower and to prevent downstream flooding. So on the one hand dams benefit people by controlling annual floods and preventing damage to floodplains, providing a power supply if it is a hydroelectric dam, and consistently controlling water flow of a river. The lakes made by dams also offer new recreational activities for people.

[**N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation: - Welcome to Jordan Lake State Recreation Area**](http://www.ncparks.gov/Visit/parks/jord/main.php)

However on the other hand, the building of dams can cause problems too, particularly downstream. Changes in water flow can negatively affect the quality of the soil, habitats of animals and plants downstream, block fish migration, loss of fish and plant species and cause erosion. Often too, many people have to leave their homes and locate somewhere else because their homes are part of the land that will be covered in water by the storage lake (reservoir) made by the dam.

[**We All Live Downstream | International Rivers**](http://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/we-all-live-downstream-2700)

Your perspective is formed from your experience, interests and concerns. For instance, governments continue to propose large dam projects to solve problems that the community see as the government’s responsibility – making sure that we all have water, or a power supply to meet our household or work needs, to keep us safe and to protect our properties from natural disasters. Supporters of dams view them as benefits – a solution to a problem. Dams are a man-made way to control flooding and prevent a natural disaster. Floods, from a government’s point of view, cost the community millions of dollars to rebuild [damaged](http://www.ga.gov.au/hazards/flood/) homes, businesses, and lives. But it seems that many would disagree.

Others have a different perspective; they see the government’s dam solution as a problem – even as a man-made disaster.  As strongly as dam supporters feel about building dams, others feel just as strongly about [protecting their river systems](http://www.internationalrivers.org/en/image/tid/467). People across the world, stand up to governments by organizing campaigns against large [dam proposals](http://images.google.com.au/imgres?imgurl=http://cache.boston.com/universal/site_graphics/blogs/bigpicture/brazil_05_28/protest05.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/2008/05/indigenous_brazilians_protest.html&h=666&w=990&sz=270&hl=en&start=35&um=1&usg=__MirxJCnGJ8Tst1-9RjGUQfSoXF4=&tbnid=OtYa_4MWnQ0_MM:&tbnh=100&tbnw=149&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dphotos%2Bof%2Briver%2Bdams,%2Bhydro%2Bdams%26start%3D21%26ndsp%3D21%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN).

**One reason a community may dam rivers is to control downstream flooding…**

**Flooding:**

From the perspective of a city resident whose home has been flooded

You live in a city where it is storming. The local river water is rising. It continues to rain, the river breaks its banks and flood water rush into your house. You are scared and busy trying to get yourself and your kids to higher ground (or perhaps you have been evacuated by emergency services from the area). At its peak you record 3 feet of water in your house, damaging all your furniture and the structure of the house itself. It is going to cost you hundreds of dollars to replace the furniture and fix the damage. As well, once the waters have gone away there is the threat of getting sick from disease carrying mosquitoes or from dirty and polluted waters. Emergency Services warn people to take care. From your experience and perspective, that flood was a disaster.

Watch the video - [North Carolina Floods Leave Two Dead](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ga0EKIZVzjs)

From the perspective of a farmer whose soil is rich and suitable for growing crops and grazing cattle

You are a farmer and your farmland is flooded. This is a blessing and a disaster. Floods do huge damage to crops and drown livestock. Many farmers have to move their grazing herd of cattle to higher ground.  But you are thankful for the rain and water knowing that once the flood waters have gone, your land has had rich nutrient river sediment deposited on it by the flood and your dams have been filled. This is why your land is such good grazing land and has such rich soil to grow your crops in. Therefore from your experience and perspective natural flooding is a good event that benefits your land and your livelihood.

Read more here - [Flood - The Routine Disaster](http://www.webquestdirect.com.au/files/uploads/docs/floodroutinedisaster.pdf)

**Group Assignment:**

China’s Three Gorges Dam:

* 1. Explore perspectives
		1. Pros - [CHINA THREE GORGES PROJECT](http://www.ctgpc.com/en/_304051/_304525/index.html)
		2. Cons - [China's Three Gorges Dam: An Environmental Catastrophe?](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/chinas-three-gorges-dam-disaster/)
	2. Create an Infographic about the project, displaying information that outlines the “costs” and benefits