

**Sent:** Wednesday, October 25, 2000 2:24 PM

**Subject:** WORLD'S FRESHWATER SYSTEMS GET POOR HEALTH REPORT

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## World's freshwater systems get a poor health report

EAST LANSING, MI — A physical examination of the world's freshwater systems indicates that they are so degraded that their ability to support human, plant and animal life is in danger.

As a result, many freshwater species are facing rapid population decline or extinction, and an increasing number of people will face serious water shortages, according to a report released 21 October by the World Resources Institute (WRI).

The report, "Pilot Analysis of Global Ecosystems (PAGE): Freshwater Systems," said that by 2025, at least 3.5 billion people, or nearly 50 percent of the world's population, will face water scarcity. Also, 29 of the world's river basins — with a projected population of 10 million each by 2025 — will experience further scarcity.

The report said that while many regions of the world have ample freshwater supplies, four out of every 10 people now live in river basins that are experiencing water scarcity.

"The findings are very disturbing," said Jonathan Lash, WRI president. "We essentially gave the world's freshwater systems a physical exam and found out that it is more imperiled than the other ecosystems we studied."

Much of the degradation of the world's freshwater systems has been caused by habitat destruction, construction of dams and canals, introduction of nonnative species, pollution and overpopulation, the report said.

It said waterborne diseases from fecal pollution of surface waters continued to be a major cause of illness in the Third World.

While surface water quality has improved in the United States and Western Europe, nutrient loading from agricultural runoff continues to be a big problem, according to the report.

The report can be viewed by visiting  
<http://www.wri.org/wri/wr2000>.

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