

The Downside of Water Power

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, PEOPLE HAVE FOUND WAYS TO USE WATER FOR OUR BENEFIT. BUT, SOMETIMES, THE POWER OF WATER WORKS AGAINST US.

When water flows over land, little by little it breaks apart the rock and soil¹³ and moves them away. This erosion of the ground can destroy buildings, roads, and railways built near water. Erosion can change the direction of rivers, too, and that can lead to international problems. In the early 1960s, the Chamizal Dispute between Mexico and the United States occurred when a change in river flow made a large island in the middle of the Rio Grande, the border between Mexico and Texas.

¹³soil: the top part of the land where plants grow

Video Quest



Erosion

Watch the video to learn more about erosion. How can water affect the natural landscape?

Water power can cause natural disasters. Flooding can occur naturally when mountain snow melts in the springtime or heavy seasonal rains cause rivers to overflow.

But flooding can also be the result of human activity, like when a dam breaks. In 2005, the dams holding back the water of the Gulf of Mexico were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans was flooded and more than a thousand people were killed.



Tsunami is a Japanese word, but now we all know what it means. In 2011, northeast Japan's coastal region was hit by giant waves of water after an earthquake occurred under the ocean floor.

Entire towns were destroyed, and a nuclear **power plant** was damaged. The plant was shut down, and thousands of people were moved to safety to avoid the risk of injury by **radioactivity**.