

## Three Gorges Dam Summary<sup>1</sup>

Along the Yangtze River, in a section known as Three Gorges, the People's Republic of China is building what will be the world's largest dam. Construction began in 1993 but the dam is not expected to be fully operational until 2009. Once completed, a 370-mile long reservoir will be flooded and the dam will be able to produce hydroelectric power. By capturing the energy of the falling water, project engineers have estimated that the Three Gorges Dam could provide one-eighth of the country's electricity. The government and other supporters claim that the dam will strengthen China's economy by controlling flooding, creating an abundance of electricity, and fostering economic development along the edges of the new reservoir.

However, due to the environmental and social consequences of the dam's completion not everyone thinks the Three Gorges Dam is a good idea. Two million people will be displaced when the surrounding land is flooded, forcing them to move to new homes. There will also be an increase in water pollution and a loss of wildlife, many of which are already on the endangered species list. Once finished nearly 8,000 historic sites will be underwater, adding to the debate of whether the Three Gorges Dam will improve or harm the lives of people in the region.

For more information about the Three Gorges Dam:

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/06/060609-gorges-dam.html>

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<sup>1</sup> Ashcroft, Minnie (2003). *World Regions East Asia Geography and Environments*. Washington, D.C.: The National Geographic Society