

# 2020: A WILD YEAR IN WATER

2020 has been a difficult year for everyone.  
But water continues to teach.



**2020 WAS THE  
YEAR THAT THE  
NEW GLOBAL  
REALITY SET IN.**

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The global water crisis is growing more and more serious every year. While the COVID-19 pandemic has brought infectious disease to the front of everyone's mind, 2020 has been packed full of water challenges, too. In many ways, 2020 has been a wake-up call: this is the "new normal."

## CHALLENGES

- **Flooding & Dams.** China suffered an estimated \$32 billion in losses due to flood damage. The Three Gorges Dam reached critical capacity, the highest in its history. In the United States, two dams in Michigan failed after historic rainfall. A dam failure in Uzbekistan, in part the result of outdated rainfall calculations, required the evacuation of 100,000 people.
- **Droughts.** The Panama Canal, an environmental disaster to begin with, faced record-breaking droughts this year, leading to costly disruptions. Extreme drought conditions and rising temperatures on the West Coast led to California's worst wildfire season in history, which burned over 4% of the state's land.

## GLIMMERS OF HOPE

- **Water Conservation.** Water use in the Western United States continued to drop, largely as a result of new regulations in response to droughts in the region.
- **Dam Removal.** The indigenous-led plans to remove four dams along the Klamath River—the world's largest dam removal project to date—have been revived.
- **Water Quality.** Almost all of Flint, Michigan's lead service lines have been replaced (finally). Drops in pollution levels as a result of the COVID lockdowns have led to improved water quality, reminding us that better water is certainly within our reach.