



**Friends of the Earth Middle East**  
جمعية أصدقاء الأرض الشرق الأوسط  
**ידידי כדור הארץ** המזרח התיכון



## Water and Peace in the Middle East “Environmental Peacemaking”





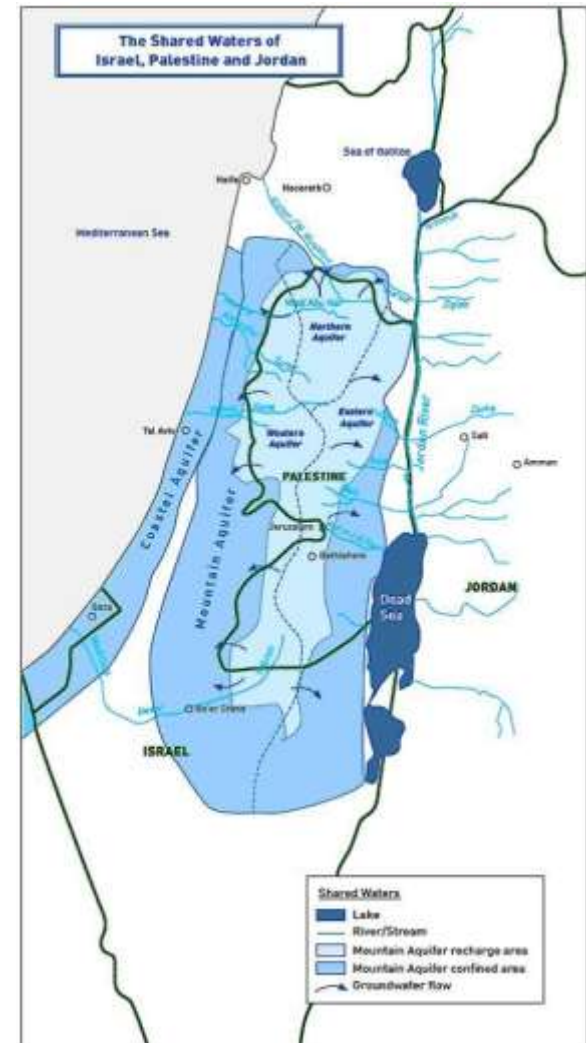
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- Only regional organization of Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian environmentalists, working to protect our shared environmental heritage.
- We seek to advance both sustainable regional development and the creation of necessary conditions for lasting peace in our region.
- FoEME has offices in Amman, Bethlehem, and Tel-Aviv.
- FoEME is a member of Friends of the Earth International, the largest grassroots environmental organization in the world.

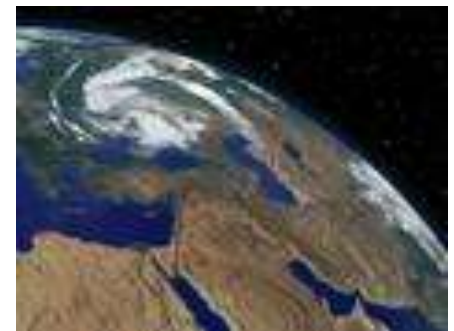
# Water: Trans-boundary dimension in the Middle East

- Scarce resource
- Competing demands by countries and by sectors
- Unequal distribution
- Increasingly polluted
- **Interdependent** nature



# Focus Areas

- FoEME's efforts are focused on the rehabilitation of our shared water resources: the Jordan River, Dead Sea, Mountain and Coastal Aquifers and fostering awareness about the impact of climate change on our water resources.



# FoEME works on 2 strategic levels

- “Top-Down”: Research / Lobby / Advocacy:  
FoEME advances these issues by publishing scientific and social research and by holding national level advocacy campaigns
- “Bottom-Up”: Community / Grassroots:  
Work with, and gain support from community residents

This combination of lobby activities & community work has proved extremely successful...

# FoEME - Projects

## 1. RESEARCH / LOBBY / ADVOCACY / Concept Documents identify the long term goals of projects

- Dead Sea
- Jordan River
- Mountain Aquifer
- Climate Change

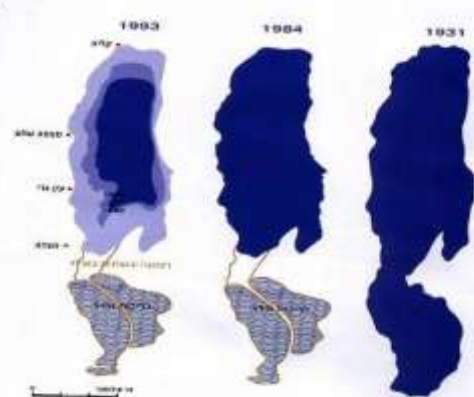


## 2. COMMUNITY / GRASS ROOTS

- “Good Water Neighbors”



# The Dead Sea



- The lowest place on earth
- Saltiest body of water
- Unique geological area
- Source of human culture
- Rich in minerals and therapeutic qualities

## But human intervention has caused:

- Decrease of water level by 1 meter / year due to diversion of Jordan River (by Israel, Jordan and Syria) and the mineral industries (both Israeli and Jordan)
- Loss of 1/3 of the Sea's surface area
- 1,700 sinkholes have opened up in the last 15 years, threatening infrastructure and development

# The Dead Sea



- The Dead Sea is a shared ecosystem and must be treated as such
- FoEME is promoting an initiative to list the Dead Sea as a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- World Heritage declaration would promise a comprehensive management plan endorsed by all sides and prevent further degradation

# The Dead Sea

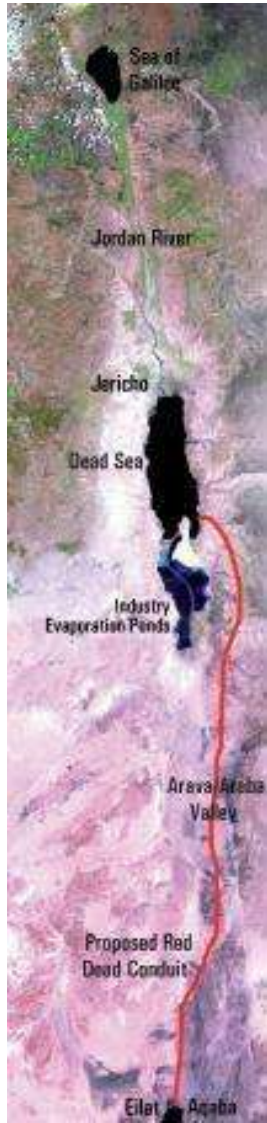


## FoEME's efforts:

- Putting the subject on the national agendas
- Lobby efforts that created an inter-ministerial committee and discussion in the Israeli parliament
- World media coverage; CNN, BBC, NBC, ABC, SKY
- Cooperation between Israeli and Jordanian mayors of communities that reside around the Dead Sea



# The “Red Dead Canal”



- Project led by the World Bank, donor states funding feasibility study, presently in progress
- Seen as a Jordan / Israel / Palestine “peace project”, and promoted as an environmental project to “Save the Dead Sea”
- But “Red Dead Canal” primary interest is in water desalination; to increase water supplies, especially to Jordan
- Environmental risks to 3 ecosystems; Gulf of Aqaba (damage to sensitive coral reefs), Arava Valley (seismic area) and the Dead Sea itself (mixing of waters)
- FoEME has demanded the need to study other alternatives to “Save the Dead Sea”— namely, the rehabilitation of the Lower Jordan River
- Lobby actions (Comments to the ToR of the feasibility studies over the years)
- Community support (brought 100’s of residents from the area to World Bank Public Hearings held in all 3 countries)

# Lower Jordan River

- The lowest River in the world, flowing from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea
- Along both sides of the Valley are numerous historical, cultural and natural sites



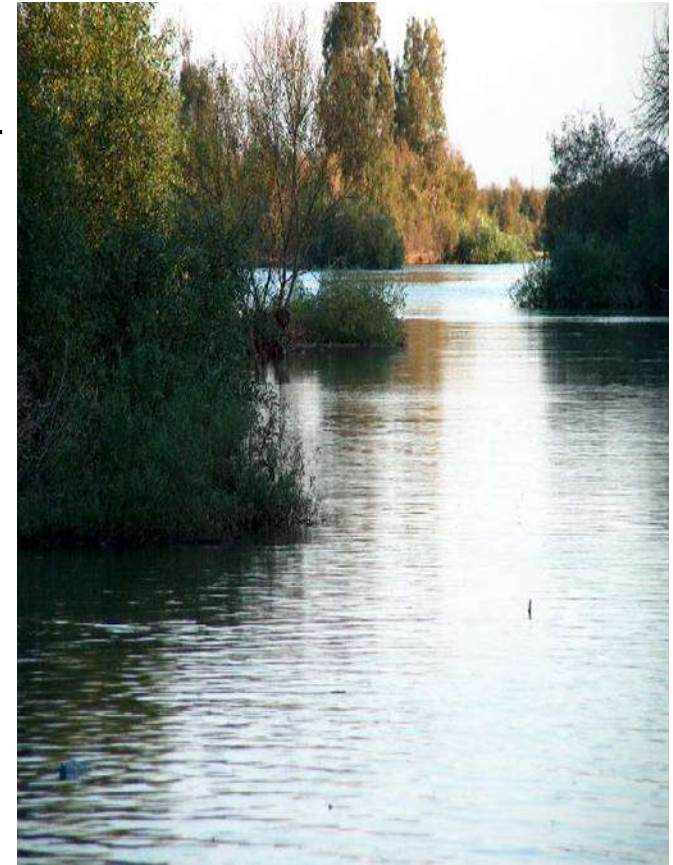
- 500 million birds migrate twice annually over the Jordan Valley



# Lower Jordan River

## Human intervention “The Water Grab”:

- ❑ **Over pumping** and **dams** divert the natural water flow
- ❑ **Sewage** and **salt water** are dumped instead
- ❑ Closed military zone; with **no public access**, the public is simply unaware of the scope of the problem



# Lower Jordan River

- FoEME's efforts: created a **Mayors Forum** with mayors from both sides of the Jordan River and Dead Sea – the 1<sup>st</sup> of its kind. →
- Created **national** and **regional advisory committees** that include government representatives from Israel, Jordan and Palestine to discuss new research findings undertaken by FoEME →
- The mayors participated in “**Big Jump**” events, jointly calling for the rehabilitation of the Jordan River →



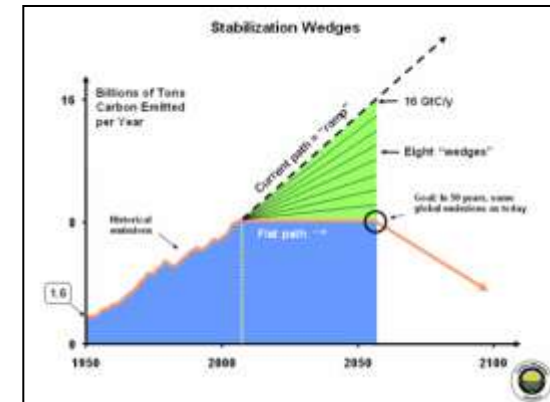
← The Mayors meet at the **international border** in a kayak in the Jordan River!

Signing on MoU to promote a **Jordan River Peace Park** →

# Lower Jordan River

## FoEME's efforts: New rehabilitation project, overall goals:

- Conducted **research** that identified **how much water is needed** to rehabilitate the River
- Conducted **research** to see where water transfers can take place from each countries' **water economies**
- Presently working on **lobbying** and creating the **political will** to rehabilitate the River.

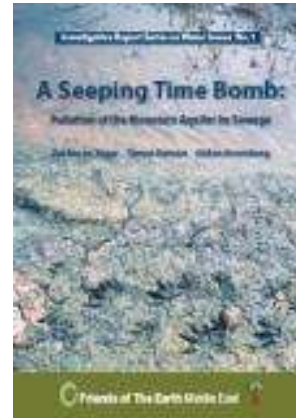


# Mountain Aquifer



- **Cross border aquifer** situated under the West Bank and Israel, supplies 600 million m<sup>3</sup> of water for more than 3 million people
- **Important** to both Israelis & Palestinians
- Quality of the water is **threatened by pollution**
- Sensitive geological area that **allows sewage to seep into the aquifer**

# Mountain Aquifer

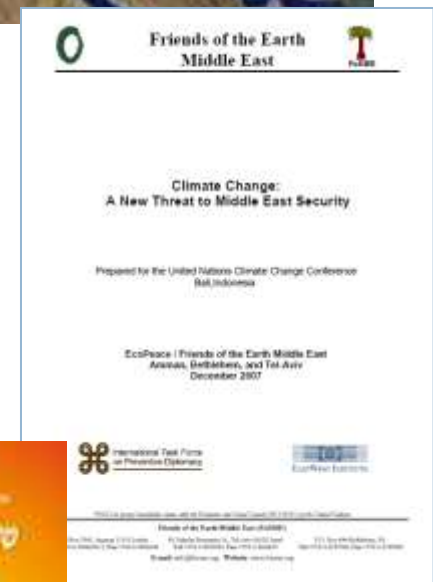


## FoEME's efforts:

- **Research** project to **identify the major sources of pollution** from (1) sewage and (2) solid waste; published reports
- The reports describe the different **solutions** that have been proposed and the factors that prevent the implementation of sewage solutions or solid waste disposal facilities, as well as drawing conclusions and **recommendations** to protect the Mountain Aquifer.

# Climate Change

- FoEME researched the projections that are being made for climate change in the Middle East in Egypt, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Jordan, and other adjacent river basin countries.
- The study focused on the anticipated impact this will have on our water sources and its likely ramifications on human security & political stability within this already volatile region.
- FoEME recently produced a simple, easy-to-use “resource guide” designed primarily for decision makers and the media in Israel (soon to produce a similar guide in Arabic for neighboring Arab countries)



# “Good Water Makes Good Neighbors” (GWN)

- 25 Israeli / Jordanian / Palestinian “**partnering communities**” focused on a common water issue (9 Jordan River, 5 Dead Sea, 9 Mt. Aquifer, 2 Coastal Aquifer)
- **Raise awareness** of shared water problems between Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians
- **Promote cross border dialogue** on common issues of concern
- Project staff person in each community
- Partner with municipality, school and community centers
- Work towards **shared solutions**



# GWN Target Groups

- Youth ‘Water Trustees’



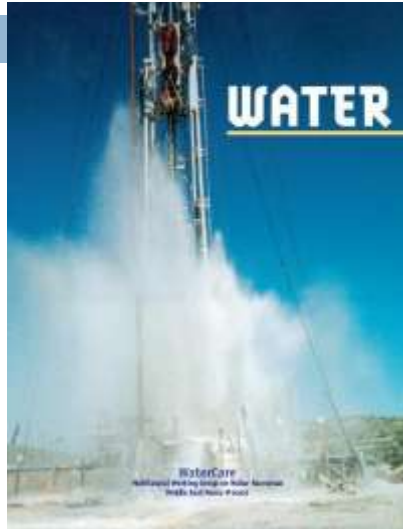
- Adult groups



- Mayors



# Youth Activities & WaterCare program



# Ecological workshops – learning to build with recycled materials



Ein  
Gedi



Sha'ar  
Hagolan



Kibbutz  
Lotan



# Eco-facilities for wise water use; empowering youth



# Campaigns on local water resources

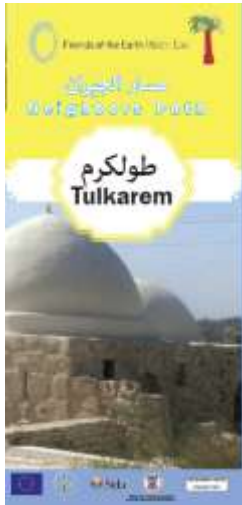


Jordan River /  
Dead Sea  
communities  
campaign for  
the Jordan  
River

→  
Mountain Aquifer  
communities  
undertake  
campaign to  
preserve the  
Mountain Aquifer



# Adult residents visiting local & cross border “Neighbors Paths”

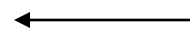
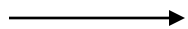


# Cross Border Mayors' Meetings; promoting community leadership



Meetings, conferences

'BIG  
JUMP'!



Mayors  
meeting IN  
the Jordan!

# Promoting shared solutions-1

Ongoing dialogue and establishment of relationships between neighboring communities have led to cooperative initiatives:

▣ Dead Sea joint compost solution



▣ EcoParks on Ziglab Stream / Harod River



# Promoting shared solutions2

## ▣ Jordan River Peace park initiative



## ▣ Baka Gharbia/ Baka Sharkia connection of sewage lines



# Beyond Water...

## □ Cooperation on Removal of Olive Mill Waste from Alexander River



## □ Wadi Fukin Separation Barrier stopped, co-ops



# Lessons & Recommendations

- Assistance in conflict areas should focus on peace building & identify peace dividend. Water is a critical issue.
- Community based actions are very public, gain media attention, allow for greater government cooperation.
- Both gov't and community level efforts can compliment each other. Community cross border efforts receive very little donor support – missed opportunity.





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## EcoPeace / Friends of the Earth Middle East



**Building Bridges over Troubled Waters**

[www.foeme.org](http://www.foeme.org)