

IS THE RED SEA – DEAD SEA CONDUIT THE RIGHT SOLUTION FOR THE DEAD SEA CRISES?

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Abstract: In the past, the Dead Sea's level fluctuated due to natural climatic changes. Today, however, the Dead Sea water balance is depleted by ~90%, mainly as a result of human intervention. The Jordan River, known globally for its historic value and once the Dead Sea's major water supplier, has been reduced to a poor sewage stream. The situation is a clear reflection of the regional potable water shortage. Over the past 78 years, this depletion has caused a 32m drop in the lake's level, occurring at accelerating rate that exceeded 1m/y on the average for last decade. Furthermore, the level's fall accompanied by environmental deterioration, including damages to the infrastructure, tourism, agriculture and ecosystems. The riparian parties of the Dead Sea have agreed to investigate the RSDSC (Red Sea – Dead Sea conduit) plan as a potential solution to stop the deterioration and to increase the potable water supply in the area. The World Bank is financing a 2-year feasibility study for the project, which is much too short a period to conduct sufficient research that bridges knowledge gaps, especially with regard to the environmental implications. A systemic approach that involves reviving the Jordan River–Dead Sea system is free of the mentioned above threats, yet has not been fully considered. It is therefore offered herein for *simultaneous* feasibility study. The comparison of these alternatives should involve comprehensive environmental and economic cost-benefit analyses (free of political pressure) as the precondition for choosing the best way to achieve the declared goals. It is this generation's responsibility to ensure a healthy future for Dead Sea for the generations to come before the present window of opportunities shuts for good.

Keywords: Dead Sea, Jordan River, canals, water balance, human intervention, Environmental threats, coastal oases, systemic alternative.

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