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Comp 71 Technology

Dams

What are dams? How are they useful to the environment? How are they harmful to the environment? Dams go all the way back to the Egyptian times, where they are used to block the course of the river and waterways. One use of dams is irrigation, meaning bringing water to farmlands and dry areas. Other uses include generating electricity, control flooding, deepen waterways for shipping, and for drinking water. Dams can be in all various forms and heights. When you place a dam on a riverway/waterway, you cause one side to rise upstream and behind the dam, blocking the other side. This creates a reservoir, which allows people to release water whenever they want from aqueducts or water pipes or gates.

Dams are useful because areas that flood a lot can get benefits from more steady flows of the river from the dams and under human control. Rivers that have heavy flows can be used by the new technology, called hydroelectricity, to be harnessed. Hydroelectricity converts the flowing water to electricity that passes the turbine blades and can generate electricity that powers up a lot of stuff.

Dams can also harm the environment in plenty of ways too. Dams disallows fishes like salmons to swim up and down (jumping in water) because the dam will block the fish. So the dams are basically changing the fishes’ lifecycles. The reservoir water released back into the bank is usually colder than normal water is suppose to be. And last but not least, the dams can cause the regular flowing nutrients to stop flowing downstreams, which kills a lot of the ecosystems.

However, there are a lot of solutions to these dam issues. There are fish ladders for the fishes to jump by one by one up to get to the other side. Additionally, reservoir water can also be warmed and heated as it’s been released from the dam through the gate.

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