# A Sea Divided

Weigh the reach of decisions across people and places

**TOT.P.2.3.C** "Evaluate the extent to which political and economic decisions have had significant impact on human and physical environments of various places and regions."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline two government decisions, circle a physical change caused by each, and number one effect on people linked to each change. Use your marks to compare how far the decisions' impacts reached.

### The Changing Aral Sea

1 In the 1960s, Soviet leaders expanded cotton farming across Central Asia. Cotton brought income but needed heavy irrigation. The government built canals that diverted water from the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers. Before the diversions, both rivers fed the Aral Sea, a large inland lake. As less river water reached it, the sea began to shrink. Its exposed lakebed left salt and other sediments that winds carried toward nearby settlements. A policy intended to increase farm output had altered the region's water supply and land surface.

2 As the shoreline retreated, ports such as Muynak in present-day Uzbekistan lost access to open water. Fishing businesses closed, and many workers had to seek other jobs. Irrigated cotton fields provided farm income, but poorly drained fields also became salty as water evaporated, making some farmland less productive. Dust from the exposed seabed, which can carry salt and agricultural chemicals, threatened air quality in nearby towns. These effects were uneven: farmers receiving canal water gained a resource, while people who depended on the sea lost a workplace and a source of food.

3 After the Soviet Union broke apart, Kazakhstan invested in a dam completed in 2005 that holds water in the northern part of the Aral Sea. The North Aral Sea rose, became less salty, and supported a renewed fishing industry. Farther south, in Uzbekistan, the southern basin remained severely reduced because river water was still diverted for irrigation. The dam helped one part of the region, but it did not restore the entire sea. Comparing these places shows why the scale of an impact matters: a decision can bring major local benefits without reversing a wider environmental loss.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the cotton-irrigation policy produce both economic gains and major losses? Identify who experienced each.

2. Why was the retreating shoreline more than a minor change for Muynak? Use two effects from the passage.

3. To what extent did Kazakhstan's dam reverse the Aral Sea's decline? Compare the north and south.

4. Which decision affected a larger area, the Soviet river diversions or Kazakhstan's dam? Support your judgment with evidence from both decisions.

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A coastal city proposes clearing a mangrove forest to build a cargo port. In one paragraph, predict a physical-environment change and different effects on people in a fishing village and the port district; judge how significant the decision would be for each place, including one benefit and one cost.

# A Sea Divided



## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two government decisions, circle a physical change caused by each, and number one effect on people linked to each change. Use your marks to compare how far the decisions' impacts reached. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How did the cotton-irrigation policy produce both economic gains and major losses? Identify who experienced each. | **Irrigation provided income to cotton farmers, but shrinking sea access closed fishing businesses and cost workers their jobs.** |
| 2 | Why was the retreating shoreline more than a minor change for Muynak? Use two effects from the passage. | **Muynak lost access to open water, and fishing businesses closed, forcing many workers to seek other jobs.** |
| 3 | To what extent did Kazakhstan's dam reverse the Aral Sea's decline? Compare the north and south. | **It raised the North Aral Sea and supported fishing there, but it did not restore the severely reduced southern basin.** |
| 4 | Which decision affected a larger area, the Soviet river diversions or Kazakhstan's dam? Support your judgment with evidence from both decisions. | **The diversions affected a larger area: they shrank the sea and exposed its lakebed, while the dam improved the northern part but did not restore the south.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Clearing the mangroves would remove habitat for young fish and leave part of the coast less protected from storm waves. In the nearby fishing village, smaller catches could threaten families whose income depends on fishing, so the decision might be highly significant there. In the port district, new shipping jobs could bring substantial income, though more ship traffic might add noise and air pollution. The city would gain trade, but the fishing village could bear more of the environmental cost. I would judge the benefits significant for the port district and the losses significant for the village.

Accept other supported judgments about the relative reach of the two Aral Sea decisions. For the open task, look for a plausible physical change, distinct effects in both places, a benefit and a cost, and a reasoned judgment of significance.