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Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution  
**Biology Department Seminar**



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# **Water and War: Hydropolitics in the Middle East**

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The total mass of water on Earth is constant, but as the global temperatures rise, water distributions shift, with large regions facing long term water crises that result in hydropolitics as countries try to obtain and negotiate future water supplies.

The Middle East has the greatest potential globally for water based conflicts given its chronic shortages (<2% of global precipitation), lack of water sovereignty (>50% comes from outside sources), and increasing population pressures coupled with higher temperatures and frequent droughts. All recent projections indicate water conflicts will be the major destabilizing force of this century.

Satellite imagery shows that the river basins of what was the ancient Fertile Crescent are shrinking faster than any other water reserve in the world. Available water throughout Iraq and Syria are often polluted by industrial discharge and sewage, and salt water incursions are destroying world heritage marshlands in coastal areas. This talk will give an overview of water impacts in Iraq, the country with the least control of its water resources, and how impending water crises affect Middle East politics.