

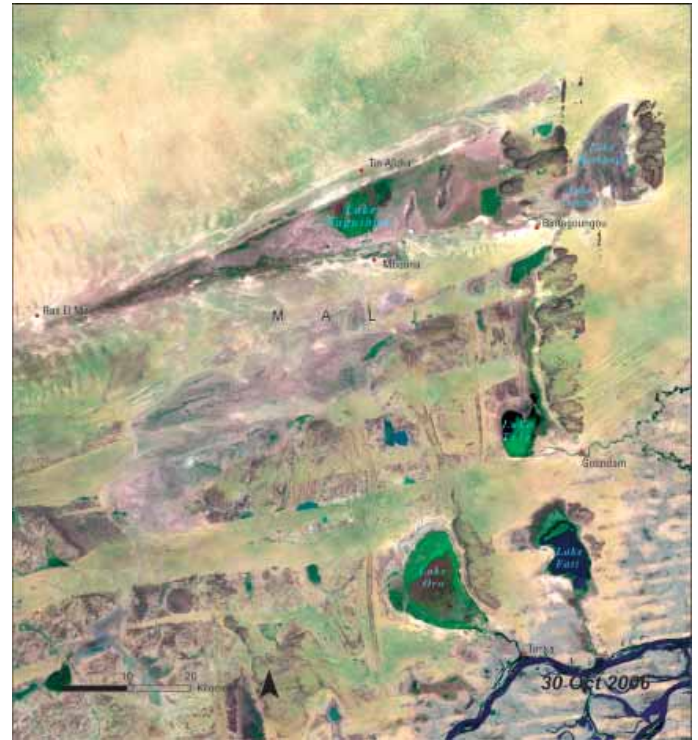


# AFRICA

## Atlas of Our Changing Environment

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29 July 2008  
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## The Drying Up of Lake Faguibine: Mali



When Mali's Lake Faguibine is full, it is among the largest lakes in West Africa—it covered an estimated 590 km<sup>2</sup> in 1974—and is an important source of water for the surrounding area. The lake is at the end of a

series of basins that receive water from the Niger River when it floods. Thus, water levels in Lake Faguibine are closely tied to the flow of the Niger River. A lack of rainfall in the catchments of either the lake or the river can affect water levels in Lake Faguibine.

Water levels have fluctuated widely in Lake Faguibine since the beginning of the 20th century. However, in the late 1980s, an extended period of reduced precipitation led to a complete drying up of the lake in the 1990s, making the traditional livelihoods of fishing, agriculture, and pastoralism difficult if not impossible. Despite relatively normal rainfall in recent years, Lake Faguibine remains nearly dry.

A 2003 Columbia University study linked changes in sea surface temperature to drought in the Sahel during the 1970s and 1980s. More recent research has linked sea surface temperatures to human induced global warming. As global warming intensifies, there may be more change in store for West Africa and for the people who depend on water resources such as Lake Faguibine for their livelihoods.

