



Water

Ataturk Dam, Turkey

Built in 1990, the Ataturk Dam on the Euphrates River in southeastern Turkey is the centerpiece of the Southeastern Anatolia Project. The Ataturk Dam is the largest in a series of 22 dams and 19 hydroelectric stations built on the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers in order to provide irrigation water and electricity to this arid region of the country. When the project's entire system of reservoirs, power generation stations, and irrigation channels is operational (projected to occur in 2010), the irrigation of approximately 1.7 million hectares (4.2 million acres) of land will be possible. In these

two Landsat images, acquired in 1976 and 1999, respectively, the transformation of the region around the dam is strikingly apparent. The dam's reservoir reached capacity in 1992 and has supplied sufficient water for irrigation to turn a once-arid landscape into a green one. This is especially obvious in the lower right-hand corner of the 1999 image, where irrigated fields completely surround the town of Harran. The development of the Harran region could not have occurred without the Ataturk Dam project, especially since the town is many kilometres from the river.