

Investigating Rivers

Learning Objective:

To find out about the causes of river pollution and the effect it has on the environment.



What is river
pollution?

What do
you think some of the
causes are?

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Only 1% of all the world's water is usable by humans and some of that water is being polluted by many different factors. Agriculture, industry and people are causing rivers to become polluted. This means that not only does the water become smelly and unpleasant, it becomes unsafe for people, animals and plants.

Why is river pollution dangerous? Let's have a look at some reasons.



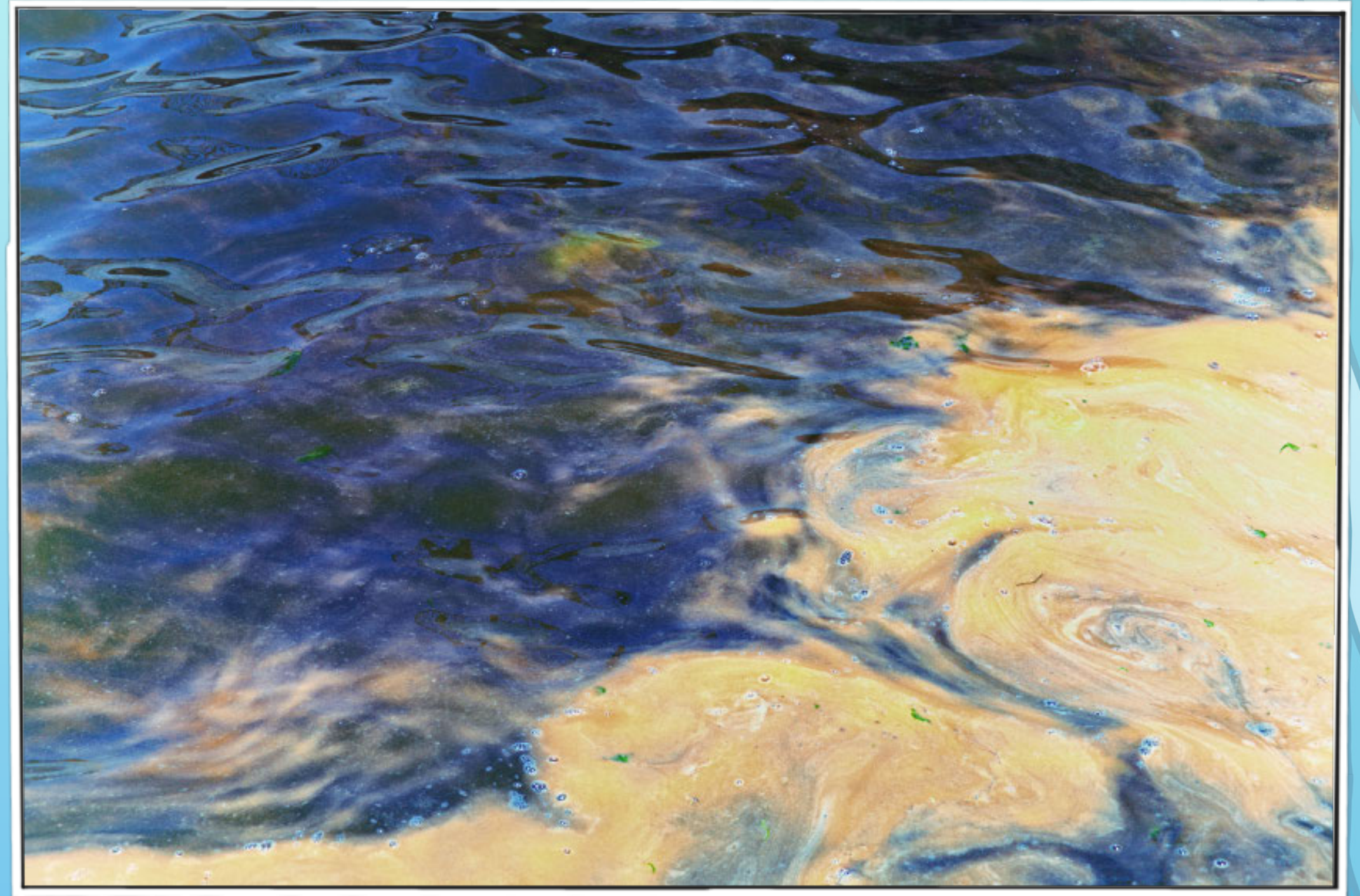
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Agriculture

Farmers today often have to use pesticides and other chemicals to make their crops grow. These chemicals get washed into the river with the rain, polluting the water.

Pesticides are designed to kill insects and other animals that try to eat the farmer's crops. These chemicals cause algae to grow. Algae can destroy water plants and make people sick.



Would you swim in this water?



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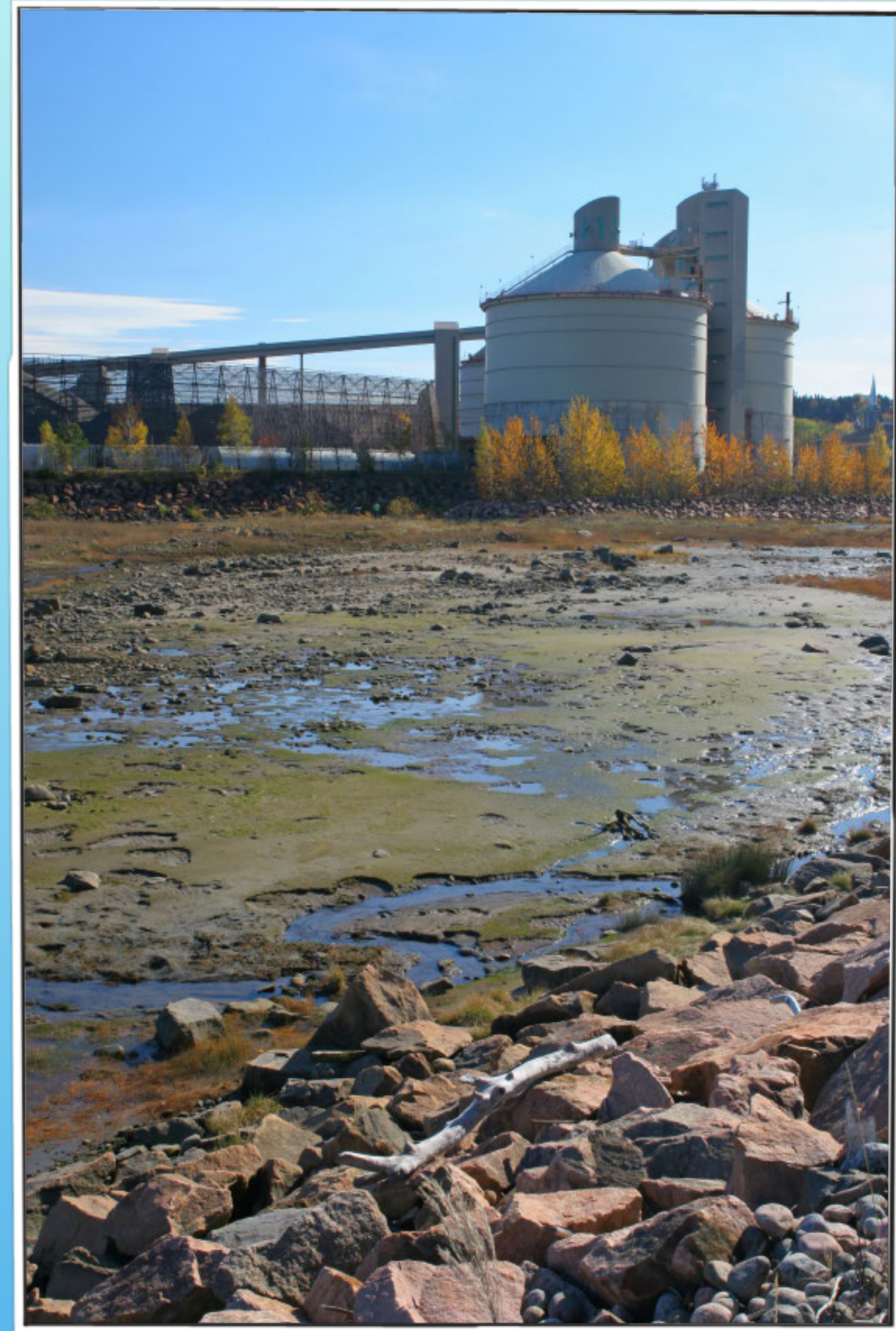
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Industry

Many factories use toxins and chemicals which are highly dangerous and sometimes very expensive to dispose of properly.

There have been many cases of factories dumping their waste illegally which causes bad river pollution. Factories often use water to cool down machinery too. This water is then drained back into the rivers.

The water is not always clean and is warmer than river water which lowers the level of oxygen. This is bad news for many of the organisms that live in rivers.



People

Have you ever thrown a piece of rubbish on the floor if you couldn't find a bin? Some people throw their rubbish straight into the rivers. Some human waste contains chemicals that are harmful to the water life. Rubbish and waste look unsightly too and often make rivers smelly.



Have you seen a river like this?



Oil

Oil spills are a serious cause of pollution. They create a film on top of the water which looks multi-coloured and shiny, but this film stops the oxygen from entering the water. Large oil spills are hazardous to the birds and other wildlife that live in and on the water because the oil contaminates their feathers and skin.



This is a large oil spill.





Where are
the most polluted
rivers in the
world?

Have you seen river
pollution?

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These rivers are the ten most polluted rivers in the world.

The Ganges River

The Yellow River

The Doce River

The Citarum
River

The Mississippi
River

The Sarno River

The Marilao River

The Cuyahoga
River

The Matanza-
Riachuelo River

The Buriganga
River

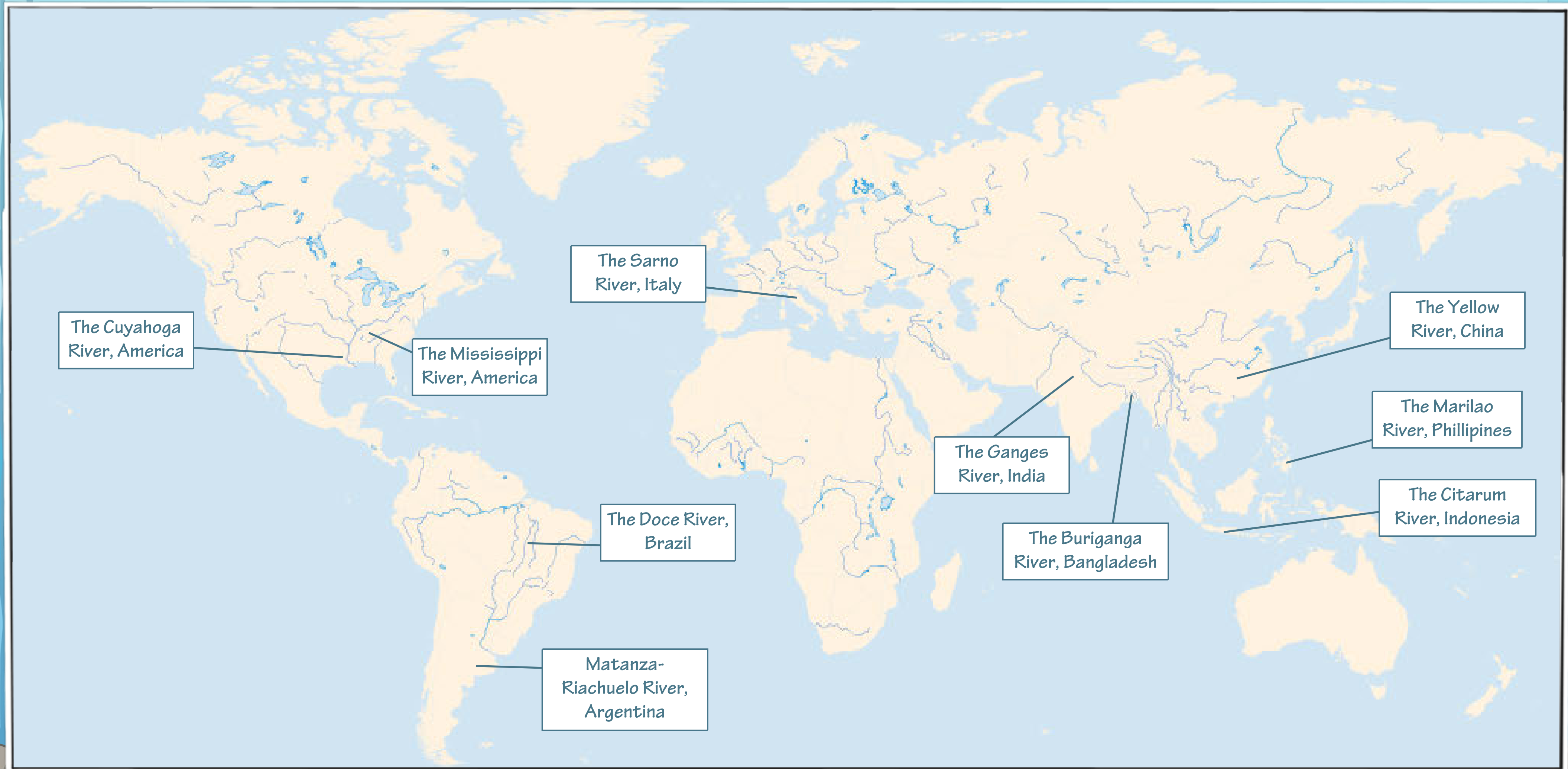
Have
you heard of these
rivers?



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This map shows where some of the world's polluted rivers are.



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What do these pictures tell you about river pollution and the effect on the environment?



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How can
we prevent
river
pollution?

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Did you think of these solutions?

- Don't throw paint, oil or other forms of litter down the sink or toilet.
- Use environmentally friendly household cleaning products.
- Don't overuse pesticides or fertilisers.
- Don't throw litter into rivers. Pick up litter you see near rivers and put it in the bin.

