

Developing a river basin report card for the Tuul River, Mongolia

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The Tuul River in Mongolia forms the headwaters of Lake Baika, Russia and the Yenesei River. It has served as the water source for Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia and home to half of Mongolia's population. But the Tuul River is undergoing profound changes as a result of climate change, livestock grazing and population migration of nomadic herders. These changes have stimulated an effort to develop a Tuul River report card to provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the river. The Tuul River basin nomadic herders have been abandoning their traditional lifestyle due to unpredictable climate extremes (dry summers followed by cold, snowy winters or dzuds) which lead to mass mortalities of livestock. Migration to Ulaanbaatar in their portable housing (gers) has resulted in increased water consumption from the Tuul River resulting to reduced flows, impacting downstream grazing and gold mining. The Tuul River report card will attempt to link these interrelated impacts on the river and the people who depend on it for sustenance while balancing both the ecological and socio-economic aspects in Mongolia. We have undertaken to train water resource leaders in Mongolia to develop the report card. Various key stakeholders are also being consulted, including the nomadic herders, gold miners, sanitation engineers, and water treatment providers. The report card scoping effort includes a conceptual mapping exercise, word cloud generation, conceptual diagram construction, and a prioritization exercise. The development of indicators and thresholds will follow this scoping effort to create a credible and impactful report card.

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