

According to the UN World Water Development Report, northern China will face a severe water shortage by 2025. The established eastern and middle routes of the South-to-North Water Diversion project, which began in 2002, have relieved that "thirst" to some degree. However, the western route is still a work in progress due to high

altitude, complex terrain and fragile ecosystems. The air corridor proposition may offer an innovative solution to those challenges.

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The South-to-North Water Diversion project is the world's largest water diversion project, according to a Xinhua report. It was designed to transport water from the Yangtze River to dry regions in the north of the country. At its outset, the project was estimated to cost 500 billion yuan (\$81.4 billion).

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Bao Weimin, a CAS academician and director of the Science and Technology Committee of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, believes the proposed Tianhe Project and future air corridor are natural next steps toward supporting the ecology of the Tibetan Plateau. Bao also hopes the project will promote national economic and social development, especially in northern China.

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Tianhe Project will attempt to increase annual precipitation in Sanjiangyuan (the birthplace of the Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang Rivers), the Qilian Mountains and the Qaidam region by 2.5 billion, 200 million and 120 million cubic meters respectively. Its long-term goal is to transfer 5 billion cubic meters of water per year.

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