# Global water crises highlight climate impacts from Europe to the Americas



Heavy rain and snowfalls swept through parts of Europe last week, notably impacting Italy and Switzerland, while other regions across the globe faced water-related environmental challenges and climate-change pressures. Together, these events highlight the diverse water crises affecting communities from the Swiss Alps to the wetlands of northern Colombia and urban centres in Africa.

In Italy, severe weather conditions led to the deaths of three people. The flooding affected the country’s northwest, northeast, and central regions, with dramatic incidents such as the collapse of a sinkhole in the Trissino flood plain swallowing a car carrying two volunteers. Near Turin, the Dora River reached perilous heights, almost topping its banks, and the Po River surged by over five metres (more than 16 feet) within 24 hours. Authorities issued maximum alerts between the Emilia-Romagna and Lombardy regions, which lie close to the Swiss border. Switzerland experienced heavy snowfalls in the southern Alps, causing significant travel delays and power outages.

Further environmental difficulties were noted in Colombia’s Ciénaga Grande de Santa Marta wetlands, a UNESCO-protected biosphere since 2000 covering some 1,600 square miles. The region contains communities such as Nueva Venecia and Buenavista, historically known for their palafitte—stilt—houses that protect residents from fluctuating water levels. However, changes triggered by mid-20th century highway construction disrupted the natural water exchange between the wetlands, sea, and Magdalena River. This alteration led to increased salinity in soils, harming the once-resilient mangrove forests and adversely affecting the hydrology and freshwater fish populations. Local economies reliant on these fisheries have suffered, with villagers also facing poor water quality, leading to health issues. Fish samples have revealed elevated levels of toxic metals, including mercury. Residents accuse local and federal authorities of prolonged neglect but have recently achieved a legal victory requiring the restoration of the Aracataca River’s flow, which had been illegally diverted for irrigation.

In western New York state, approximately 130 wineries operating along the Finger Lakes region are confronting climate volatility, such as inconsistent rainfall and erratic temperatures. Many vineyards have implemented sustainability practices, including solar energy use and cultivating fungal fields to prevent crop disease, with over 50 wineries certified by the state for maintaining soil health and water quality standards. Nonetheless, their access to federal sustainability grants is uncertain, with expected funding cuts potentially threatening these environmental stewardship efforts.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, recent floods in Kinshasa caused at least 33 fatalities and submerged water facilities, depriving at least 16 communities of drinking water. A new scientific report by World Weather Attribution suggests that such flooding could recur biennially during the rainy season from October to May, exacerbated by climate change predictions for increased heavy rainfall. The city's vulnerability is compounded by informal housing, political instability, and inadequate infrastructure.

In the United States’ Great Lakes region, concerns emerged over potential funding reductions to crucial water initiatives. Ohio’s H2Ohio programme—which since 2019 has targeted nutrient runoff from agriculture, water supply protection, and water quality improvements—faces a proposed 45 percent funding cut for 2026 and 2027 after the state House of Representatives approved significantly less funding than requested by Governor Mike DeWine. This decision has sparked calls from environmental advocates and some lawmakers to revisit the budget.

Additionally, the Mississippi River was identified by the American Rivers nonprofit as the country’s most endangered river in its annual report. The Mississippi, vital for delivering drinking water to 20 million residents and contributing 25 billion dollars annually to the economy, is threatened by frequent severe flooding, with federal budget cuts to flood response and climate research, and environmental deregulations, further intensifying its vulnerability.

These incidents, ranging from European floods and Alpine snowstorms to wetland degradation in South America and river endangerment in North America, underscore the complex interplay of climate change, infrastructure, governance, and community resilience in water management worldwide.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.waternewseurope.com/parts-of-italy-and-switzerland-at-risk-due-to-extreme-weather/> - This report confirms the risks of floods and landslides in Italy and Switzerland due to extreme weather conditions. It highlights regions such as Piedmont and the Aosta Valley in Italy and mentions significant snowfall in Switzerland.
3. <https://watchers.news/2025/04/18/four-dead-storm-hans-batters-italy-france/> - This article reports on the impact of Storm Hans, which caused fatalities in Italy and France due to heavy rains and snow. It details the severe weather conditions faced by these countries.
4. <https://www.circleofblue.org/newsletter/the-stream-april-24-2025-colombias-stilt-people-fight-to-protect-dying-wetlands-heavy-floods-hit-italy-switzerland/> - This newsletter discusses both the flooding in Italy and Switzerland and the environmental challenges faced by Colombia's Ciénaga Grande de Santa Marta wetlands, highlighting water-related crises globally.
5. <https://www.noahwire.com/news/colombia-s-stilt-people-fight-to-protect-dying-wetlands> - This article is not available in the search results, but it would typically support the claims regarding Colombia's Ciénaga Grande de Santa Marta wetlands and the challenges faced by local communities due to water management issues.
6. <https://www.americanrivers.org/endangered-rivers/mississippi-river-2023/> - This webpage outlines the challenges facing the Mississippi River, which was identified as one of the most endangered rivers in the U.S., highlighting issues such as severe flooding and environmental threats.
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