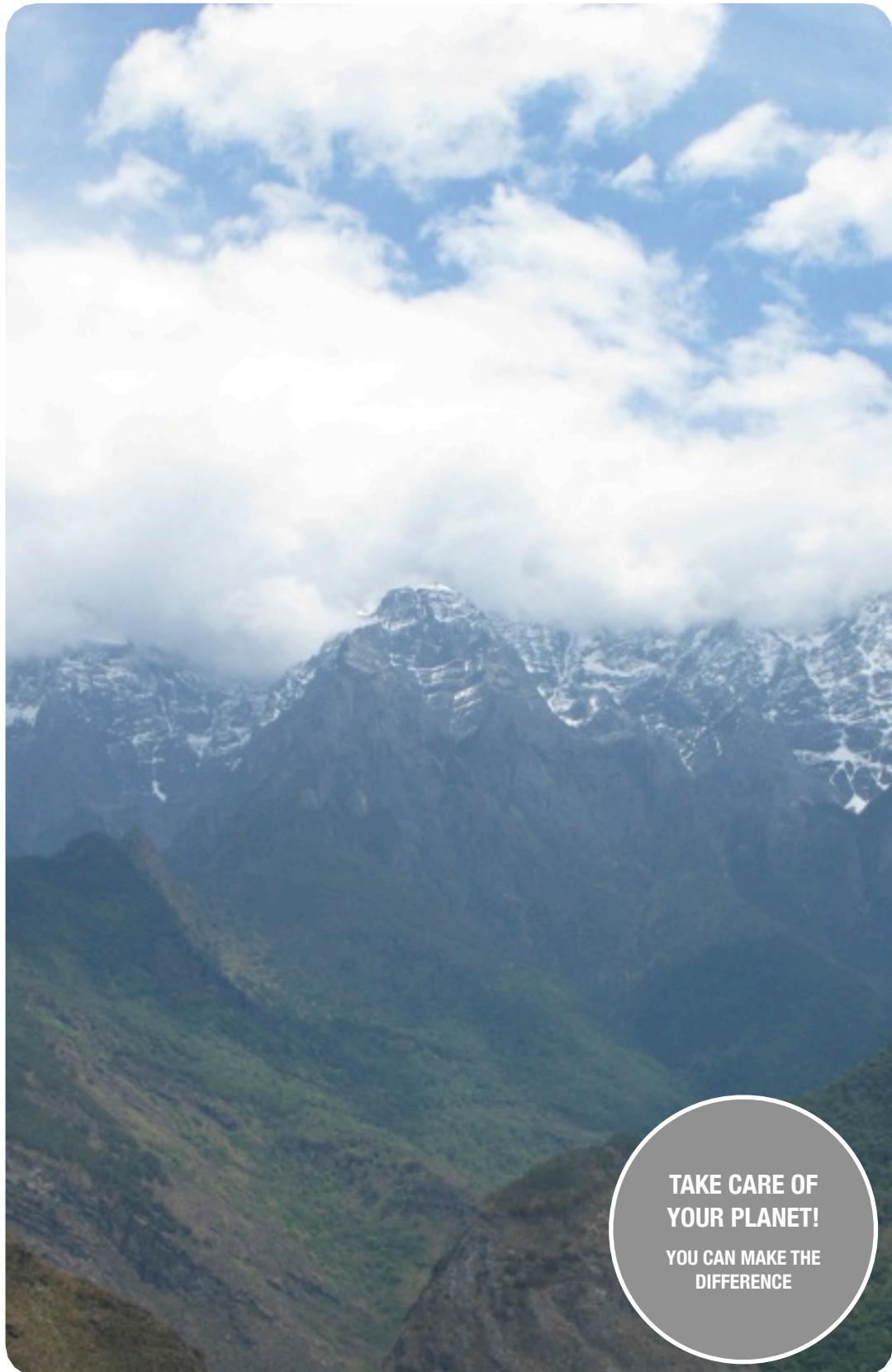
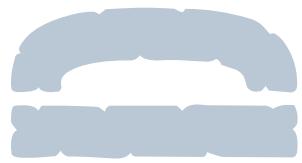
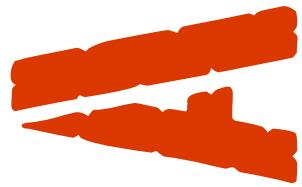
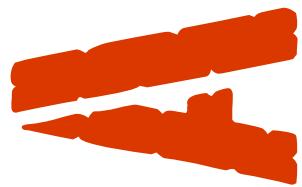


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TAKE CARE OF
YOUR PLANET!
YOU CAN MAKE THE
DIFFERENCE

THE END OF THE TIGER LEAPING GORGE, CHINA

Probably one of China's most famous hiking destinations is threatened. The construction of a road in the gorge in the 90s, which

eventually got paved this month. Then a bigger plan was made: the construction of 8 dams in the Yangzi River. A plan that will flood many hectares of farmland, forcing thousands of people to move, and

wash away plant and animal life. Construction is due to start at the end of 2011. As the appetite for electricity in China is growing; more dams follow. Is it the end of the gorge?

THE GORGE



WHY BUILDING THIS DAM?

Erosion is the decline of soil quality. It is a natural phenomenon in which wind and water play an important role. An example is a river that creates a gorge after millions of years. Deforestation, overgrazing, salination, and acidification are all examples of our impact.

China needs more electricity to keep up with the economic boom. Many dams are built to generate electricity. 8 dams in the Yangzi River will have effect on the Tiger Leaping Gorge which is designated as important national park. While locals and opposition lived with the fact the gorge survived previous damage, todays' plans might be the end.

History of the gorge

I spoke to Sean, a Tibetan who has been living in this area for more than 30 years. He was the first opening a guesthouse and providing information about the region. "Eco tourism has always been my goal, but things are getting difficult", he says. Tiger Leaping Gorge is part of a National Park and therefore a protected area. Land can only be owned by locals and selling it is impossible fortunately. To have better access to the area a dirt road was built in the gorge and in the end we could live with this fact" he continues. With the road much development started. The clear cutting of the forest was a fact. Using the land for growing crops and the wood for fuel. "In april the road was completely paved bringing in hordes of tour buses. "They just don't have the gorge in their heart", he tells angry. Guesthouses are built all the time and trees are still cut.

"We have a chance to save it"

The government recently decided to start with 8 dams in the Yangzi river by the end of this year. The effects on the environment and local people are top secret. "Maybe the dam can solve a problem. The dam can provide cheap energy and perhaps gas which stops the clear cutting". Sean's proposal to reforest the area with walnut trees failed. A pity, since it could be part of the income for locals. After strong opposition of environmental organisations and locals the officials guaranteed the dams would not effect the gorge. "I don't know what the effects will be, because the government keeps this as a secret", he says with a disappointed tone.

The effects of the dams

It is indeed hard to tell what effects there will be in the gorge. One thing is sure: the rapids will disappear as water levels will be controlled. In areas close to the gorge water levels will rise, forcing locals to leave their homes. The area inhabits several native species that are already threatened and these will be gone as well. The gorge itself is a very big tourist attraction what might be the reason to save it. Still much must be done to keep it, such as environmental explanations and anti littering campaigns, that now are lacking.

