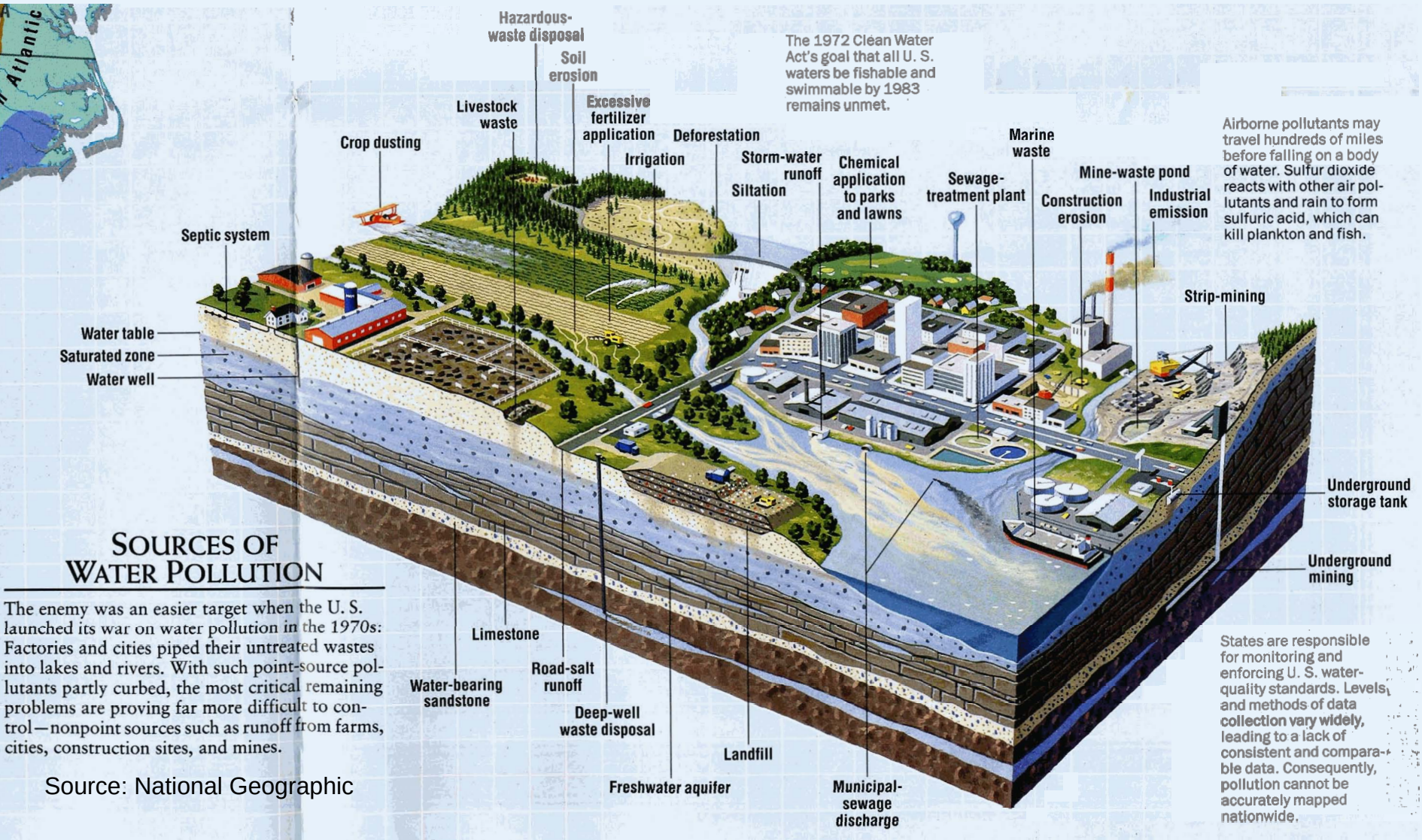

The 1972 Clean Water Act's goal that all U. S. waters be fishable and swimmable by 1983 remains unmet.

Airborne pollutants may travel hundreds of miles before falling on a body of water. Sulfur dioxide reacts with other air pollutants and rain to form sulfuric acid, which can kill plankton and fish.

States are responsible for monitoring and enforcing U. S. water-quality standards. Levels and methods of data collection vary widely, leading to a lack of consistent and comparable data. Consequently, pollution cannot be accurately mapped nationwide.

SOURCES OF WATER POLLUTION

The enemy was an easier target when the U. S. launched its war on water pollution in the 1970s: Factories and cities piped their untreated wastes into lakes and rivers. With such point-source pollutants partly curbed, the most critical remaining problems are proving far more difficult to control—nonpoint sources such as runoff from farms, cities, construction sites, and mines.

Source: National Geographic