

A NEW BEGINNING FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE

#EUGreenWeek
20–22 OCTOBER 2020



Free-Flowing Rivers for Europe

Online River Film Sessions
at the EU Green Week 2020

Wednesday, October 21, 2020, 16:30 – 18:45

Conclusions – Free-Flowing Rivers for Europe

Conclusions from two online river film sessions with panel discussion at EU Green Week 2020, Oct. 21, 2020. Provided by session co-moderators **Tobias Schäfer**, Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries (IGB Berlin) and Living Rivers Foundation, and **Michael Bender**, flow : europe and EEB Water Working Group.

Session 1: Keep the Wild Wild!

- **Prospects for a European network of strictly protected rivers – healthy, dynamic and free-flowing:**

The EU Biodiversity Strategy provides new prospects for the vision of a European network of strictly protected rivers. This river conservation policy needs to aim at both protecting and restoring the key properties of rivers: Free flow, sediment dynamics, and connectivity in all dimensions.

- **Rivers and floodplains need to be recognized as biodiversity hotspots:**

In order to gain a better understanding and achieve better management, freshwater ecosystems should be regarded as a third realm (next to marine and terrestrial). In light of the sharp decline of freshwater life, defending dynamic and free-flowing rivers against infrastructure projects, including inland navigation projects (such as the E40 Waterway or along the Oder) is a key challenge for biodiversity policies in the EU and globally.

- **Living rivers depend on the energy that hydropower is aiming to extract from them:**

As shown by a recent study on freshwater fishes in the Mediterranean Basin, hydropower is a key threat to freshwater biodiversity through imposing barriers and degradation of river and stream habitats. The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) along with European NGOs is advocating the stopping of new hydropower projects in the EU, as their environmental damage outweighs potential energy gains from electricity generation.

The event is hosted by the European Commission in collaboration with the European Environmental Bureau (EEB).

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• **Legal protection schemes for free-flowing rivers can find inspiration from existing examples:**

Examples for effective strict legal protection of free-flowing rivers against barriers and dams can be found in Slovenia (Soča River), Finland, Sweden and Spain. A Vjosa Wild River National Park, as recently announced for Albania, could spark a new way of protecting dynamic river landscapes. An inspiration from the US is the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. All over the world, initiatives for legal protection of free-flowing rivers are connecting.

Session 2: The Dam Removal Challenge

• **Restoring free-flowing rivers combines with protecting the last wild ones:**

The removal of barriers is already happening and the EU Biodiversity Strategy goal of restoring 25.000 km of rivers to a free-flowing condition offers great opportunity to reconnect fragmented habitats and re-establish connectivity throughout river systems. Prioritization for removal projects to gain maximum ecological benefit is starting to be carried out. Funding for barrier removals is increasingly available from EU funds.

• **Biodiversity aims need to be addressed in the WFD River Basin Management Plans:**

The removal of barriers to fish migration and other aspects of the protection of aquatic biodiversity need to be more prioritized in the current drafting process of the third River Basin Management Plans [Großschreibung, Plural] under the Water Framework Directive.

• **Protecting the pathways rivers create and allowing the river to renew itself – this is what river conservation is all about.**

Panel

**Session 1
Keep the Wild Wild!**

Hans Stielstra, European Commission,
DG Environment

Annette Spangenberg, EuroNatur Foundation/
Save the Blue Heart of Europe

Prof. Dr. Klement Tockner, Austrian Science Fund
and Alliance for Freshwater Life

Eef Silver, Wetlands International and
Dam Removal Europe

**Session 2
The Dam Removal Challenge**

Hans Stielstra, European Commission,
DG Environment

Eef Silver, Wetlands International and
Dam Removal Europe

Prof. Dr. Klement Tockner, Austrian Science Fund
and Alliance for Freshwater Life

David Moryc, American Rivers



Session Slides



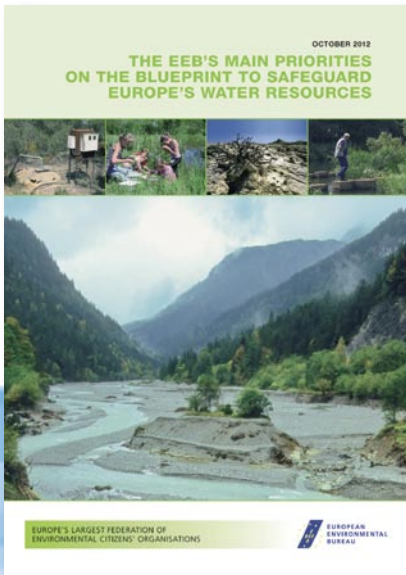
Project Coordination & Writing: Dr. Jörg Freyhof & Matthew Ford, Museum für Naturkunde, Leibniz Institute for Evolution and Biodiversity Science, Invalidenstraße 43, 10115 Berlin, Germany.

Maps & Graphic Design: Laura Bergner, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Muggelseedamm 310, 12587 Berlin, Germany.



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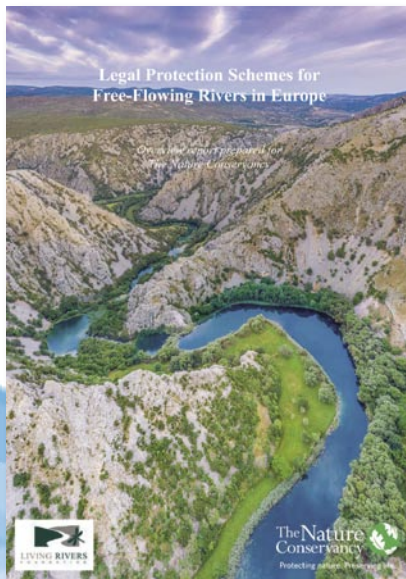
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Supporters:





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nature.org

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FILMS

Session 1 Keep the Wild Wild!

SAVE THE VJOSA RIVER

- ▶ <https://vimeo.com/230555750> (3 min)

STOP E40!

- ▶ <https://vimeo.com/280552490> (3 min)

PARKER'S TOP 50 FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT NORTHWEST RIVERS

- ▶ <https://vimeo.com/197923279> (3 min)

RUN WILD, RUN FREE. 50 Years of Wild and Scenic Rivers.

- ▶ <https://vimeo.com/292826814>
(excerpt, full film 45 min)

Related events:

- Session 2.2 „Restoring river continuity in Europe together“ (Oct. 21)
- Session 6.3 „Legal approaches to ecosystem restoration“ (Oct. 22)
- Partner event „Rivers as Lifelines for People & Nature“
hosted by The Nature Conservancy and Wetlands International (Oct. 15)



Registered event in support of World Fish Migration Day 2020.

Session 2 The Dam Removal Challenge

LACHS – QUO VADIS?

- ▶ <https://vimeo.com/419096968> (Trailer, 2 min)

CONCRETE REASONS

- ▶ <https://vimeo.com/203316476> (Trailer, 3 min)

DAMBUSTERS

- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hH-CiRD31ml&t=30s>
(Tesaser, 2 min)

THE ELWHA UNDAMMED.

What's A River For?

- ▶ <https://vimeo.com/190947032> (25 min)

Concept: Tobias Schäfer and Michael Bender
EEB support: Laura Hildt and Sergiy Moroz

Further information on river film fest:
<https://www.riverfilmfest.eu>

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