



WWF

FACTSHEET

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European Rivers

LIVING OR DAMMED?

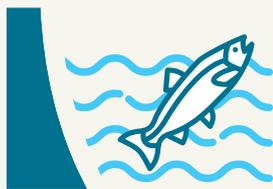
Rivers are the lifeblood of Europe. They provide us with water, food, transport, and power, supporting the economies of rural communities and major cities across the continent. They also provide us with many of our fondest memories as well as wonderful spots to fish, birdwatch, swim and sunbathe. But their beauty is often skin deep. Dip below the surface and the picture is murkier.

Freshwater species are declining in many parts of Europe; fish, frogs, birds, silently slipping away. Rivers continue to be polluted with agricultural run-off and industrial chemicals. Cut off from their floodplains, many now pose a greater flood risk than ever before.

Most rivers have been fragmented by dams – many of them obsolete – that block the flow of sediments and present an impenetrable barrier to migratory fish, so culturally, economically and environmentally

important species like sturgeon, salmon and eel have vanished from much of the continent.

There has been some progress since the EU enacted landmark freshwater regulations in 2000 but the majority of the continent's rivers and lakes are far from healthy. And the threats are not diminishing, particularly with hundreds of new dams planned across the continent, especially in the Danube basin and the Balkans. There are even moves afoot to try and water down the laws.



DAMS BLOCK THE FLOW OF MANY RIVERS AND PRESENT A BARRIER TO MIGRATORY FISH

HELP WWF BRING RIVERS BACK TO LIFE



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With €30,000

you can adopt and protect
priority river sections.

With €80,000

you can pay for the
removal of a small dam.

With €200,000

you can stop current
threats to your rivers
across Europe by protecting
key legislation.

With €600,000

you can contribute to the
restoration process for 100
hectares of degraded
floodplains or wetlands.

Restore, Reconnect, Revive: Bringing Europe's Rivers Back to Life

Along with protecting Europe's iconic rivers from poorly planned dams and defending the laws that protect the EU's freshwater ecosystems, WWF offices across Europe have joined forces to lead a movement to restore degraded river habitats, reconnect rivers to their floodplains to reduce flood risk, and revive rivers by removing obsolete dams for the benefit of people and nature.

Partnering with communities, companies, civil society organisations, and governments, WWF is able to coordinate and implement transformational river programmes across Europe. Providing unparalleled technical and policy expertise, as well as the capacity to engage directly with our million supporters across the continent, WWF is helping to bring Europe's rivers back to life. Nature will immediately return to these rivers – a big win for us and future generations.

WWF's Approach:

REMOVING OBSOLETE DAMS

With the support of volunteers and landowners, WWF has begun removing obsolete dams and barriers in rivers across Finland, changing both the way people view rivers and the landscape itself – and enabling salmon to return to long lost spawning grounds. In Spain, larger dams are on the cards. All it needs is funding and we could revive many of Europe's rivers.

BRINGING BACK FRESHWATER SPECIES

Otters, salmon, sturgeon, and other fish species are struggling. WWF is protecting and restoring their habitats, and the return of salmon and otters to some parts of Europe shows that huge progress can be made.

RESTORING RIVERS

WWF has helped to restore critical habitats along the Danube, Rhine and Meuse as well as reconnecting rivers to their floodplains. Not only does this help to lessen flood risk for communities and cities and create recreational areas, it also purifies the water and provides a boost to fish habitats and wetland wildlife that have declined rapidly in recent years.

PROTECTING NATURALLY FLOWING RIVERS

Few rivers in Europe are left in their natural flowing state, unmodified by people, and many of them have been earmarked for dams. WWF has won some major victories, recently, including stopping a poorly-planned hydropower dam in Romania.



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BEFORE



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AFTER



Why we are here.

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

www.panda.org/dcpo

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