

## The Vjosa becomes Europe's first wild river national park



[Vjosa-\(c\)-Gregor-Subic Web](#), Copyright: Gregor Subic

On 15 March 2023, Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama and Minister of Environment and Tourism Mirela Kumbaro declared the Vjosa River a Wild Rivers National Park at a formal ceremony in Tepelena. The entire Vjosa River and its main tributaries - in total a river system of more than 400 km in length - have been designated as a national park in Albania. This is unique in Europe.

"For the first time, this establishes a conservation concept that protects an entire river system and not just individual sections of the river," says Ulrich Eichelmann, Executive Director of Riverwatch. "The Wild River National Park concept should be a model for other rivers in Europe, such as the Moraca in Montenegro or the Neretva and Una in Bosnia-Herzegovina."

Annette Spangenberg, Head of Nature Conservation at EuroNatur will "continue to campaign for the other free-flowing tributaries and the delta to be protected as well, in order to permanently preserve the entire, unique river ecosystem of the Vjosa."

Most of the river basin of the Aoos (name of the Vjosa in Greek territory) lies within the boundaries of the existing North Pindos National Park. A small part, however, between the national park and the border with Albania remains unprotected to this day, leaving almost 70

river kilometres exposed to threats, for example from hydropower plants. Alexandra Pappa, Project Manager Rivers at MedINA, points this out.

<https://www.euronatur.org/unsere-themen/aktuell/riesiger-erfolg-die-vjosa-ist-nationalpark>

The Vjosa and its main tributaries run freely for over 400 km, from the Pindos Mountains in Greece, to the Adriatic coast in Albania. The river and its surroundings are ecosystems with considerable biodiversity and are home to more than 1,100 animal species, including 13 animal species and two plant species classified as globally threatened by the IUCN.

<https://www.iucn.org/press-release/202303/vjosa-one-our-last-wild-rivers-becomes-europes-first-wildriver-national-park>

## **Ecological upgrading of water bodies benefits fish and people**

Within the framework of whole-lake experiments, scientists and angling clubs jointly tested measures to enhance habitats and the traditionally popular fish stocking at 20 quarry lakes in Lower Saxony over a period of six years. In some lakes, additional shallow water zones were created, in others deadwood bundles were introduced to increase structural diversity. Other test lakes were stocked with five fish species that are sought after by fisheries. Unchanged control lakes served as a comparison. A total of over 150,000 fish were included in the study.

The result of the study, published in the journal *Science*, was that only the creation of shallow water zones increased fish stocks sustainably. These zones are ecologically indispensable for many fish species, especially as spawning grounds and refuges for young fish. The introduction of deadwood only had positive effects in individual water bodies; fish stocking failed to achieve its goal at all. This shows how important it is both for species conservation and for fisheries use to renaturalise water bodies and promote natural processes.

<https://www.igb-berlin.de/en/news/ecological-improvement-freshwater-ecosystems-benefits-fish-and-people>

## **Protection rights for the Ouse in England?**

In view of the increasing sewage pollution of watercourses in England, Lewes Council passed a motion to recognise the conservation rights of the River Ouse.

A River Rights Charter is currently being developed and will be presented to Council for approval within the next two years. The charter is derived from the Universal Declaration of River Rights, which states that rivers should have the right to flow, to be able to perform essential ecosystem functions, to be free from pollution, to be fed by sustainable aquifers, that they should have native biodiversity, and the right to regeneration and restoration.

More information at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/mar/01/sussex-river-ousefirst-in-england-legal-rights-aoe>

## **European Dam Removal Award Nominees 2022**

5 deconstruction projects have been nominated for the Dam Removal Award 2022. In addition to the jury, the aquatically interested public can also decide on the award. You can vote here: <https://damremoval.eu/dam-removal-award-2022-nominees/>

The winner will be announced on Thursday 18 May 2023.

## Become a river liberator

WWF's nationwide weir removal competition is running until 31 May. Within the framework of this competition, 3 owners of or persons responsible for weirs (or other transverse structures) that are no longer needed will be supported with 30,000 euros each if they want to remove the barriers from the rivers. Applications must be submitted via a simple form by 31 May 2023. A jury consisting of river experts from WWF Germany, Austria and Switzerland will decide on the allocation of funds this summer.

The restorations will be financed within the framework of the "Living Rivers" project, which is supported by the German Postcode Lottery. Further information and application documents at: <https://www.wwf.de/werden-sie-flussbefreier>

## National Water Strategy adopted

The interministerial National Water Strategy 2050 was adopted by resolution of the Federal Cabinet on 15 March 2023 and aims to sustainably secure drinking water supplies and wastewater disposal as well as other uses in the face of changing climate conditions and to take precautions for intact ecosystems. In addition to inland waters and groundwater, the impacts of sea-level rise on coastal protection are also considered.

The strategic topics include securing a near-natural water balance, water-compatible land use, the good status of water bodies and limiting the risks from substance inputs. Already for implementation by 2030, the Water Action Programme proposes 78 suggestions for operationalising the Water Strategy, including guidelines for dealing with water scarcity, the nationwide introduction of water withdrawal charges, the improvement of soil protection, improved rainwater management and stronger protection of peatlands. Floodplains are to be reconnected and watercourse development corridors anchored. Producer responsibility is also to be extended to protect against substance discharges. The ecological situation at hydropower plants is to be improved, including the option of dismantling. Education, training, counselling and qualification are also planned.

<https://www.bmuv.de/pressemitteilung/bundesregierung-legt-grundstein-fuer-moderneswassermanagement>  
<https://www.bmuv.de/wasserstrategie>

## Main FlussFilmFest 2023 was a complete success!



The first Main FlussFilmFest from the source region along the course of the river in 14 cinemas from Bayreuth to Frankfurt a. Main has proven to be extremely successful. "In Bayreuth, Lichtenfels, Kitzingen and Offenbach, the screenings were sold out and we also had good to very good reception in the other cities. All in all, we reached almost 1,000 people in the cinemas and several hundred more in

the supporting programme," Anne Schmitt from the association Flussparadies Franken sums up.

"The concept of short films, FlussFilm talks and the visually stunning film River worked very well in bringing the sometimes dramatic changes in river landscapes into focus and getting people excited about living rivers," says Michael Bender from the Living Rivers Foundation.

And Simone Kolb from Netzwerk Main adds: "I am especially pleased that we received so much great feedback from the cinemas as well as from the numerous partners of the supporting programme."

To the press release: <https://www.flussparadies-franken.de/erstes-main-flussfilmfest-begeistert-fast-1-000-besucher-vonbayreuth-bis-frankfurt/>

Links: <https://www.netzwerkmain.de/mainflussfilmfest> and <https://www.riverfilmfest.eu/main-flussfilmfest>  
<https://www.facebook.com/Maininitiative/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/netzwerk.main/?hl=de>

The Wassernetz Berlin offers a series of dialogue events and workshops as well as practical upgrading measures. <https://wassernetz-berlin.de/>

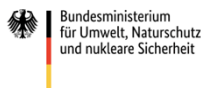
To receive the newsletter and the latest event information, please reach out to [kontakt@wassernetz-berlin.de](mailto:kontakt@wassernetz-berlin.de)

### Dates preview 2022 International :

<p>Wednesday, 12 April 2023            Meeting point: 10:00 at <b>S-Bahnhof Waidmannslust</b>            Berlin-Reinickendorf            Duration: 10:00 – 13:00</p>	<p><b>Dialog at the Packereigraben</b>            Situation at the upgraded areas at the Packereigraben, examine water samples, diversity and number of small aquatic animals, introduce gravel into the watercourse.  <a href="https://wassernetzberlin.de/2023/03/30/dialog-am-packereigraben-dienstag-12-april-2023/">https://wassernetzberlin.de/2023/03/30/dialog-am-packereigraben-dienstag-12-april-2023/</a> Registration at: <a href="mailto:athenais.georges@grueneliga-berlin.de">athenais.georges@grueneliga-berlin.de</a></p>
<p>Thursday, 20 April 2023            10:00 – 17:00  <b>Museum für Naturkunde</b>            Invalidenstr. 43, Berlin</p>	<p><b>Acting practically on water bodies - Implementing low-threshold measures together (COP15)</b>            Workshop. low-threshold measures for water bodies, practical approaches and experiences, positive ecological effects, implementation by civil society, official requirements, Wassernetz Berlin.  <a href="https://wassernetz-berlin.de/2023/03/30/gewaesserpraktisch-handeln-niedrigschwellige-massnahmen-gemeinsam-umsetzen/">https://wassernetz-berlin.de/2023/03/30/gewaesserpraktisch-handeln-niedrigschwellige-massnahmen-gemeinsam-umsetzen/</a>            Registration until 14 April 2023: <a href="mailto:kontakt@wassernetz-berlin.de">kontakt@wassernetz-berlin.de</a></p>
<p>Friday, 21 April 2023            13:00 – 17:00            Meeting point at Schwarzer Graben: Septimerstr. 44 B  <b>Berlin-Reinickendorf</b></p>	<p><b>Dialog at the Septimer Becken</b>            Water structure of the Schwarzer Graben, chemical-physical measurements, invertebrates, <a href="https://wassernetz-berlin.de/2023/03/30/dialog-am-septimer-becken-freitag-21-april-2023/">https://wassernetz-berlin.de/2023/03/30/dialog-am-septimer-becken-freitag-21-april-2023/</a>            Registration until 14 April 2023: <a href="mailto:lhornung@nabu-berlin.de">lhornung@nabu-berlin.de</a></p>

Thursday, 4 Mai 2023 19:00 – 20:30 Fluss Bad Garden Sperlingsgasse 1, Berlin-Mitte	<b>Dialog in the Fluss Bad Garden at the Spree Channel</b> European water protection regulations, aquatic habitats, possibilities of practical civic engagement. <a href="https://wassernetzberlin.de/2023/03/30/dialog-im-fluss-bad-garten-am-spreekanal-donnerstag-4-mai-2023/">https://wassernetzberlin.de/2023/03/30/dialog-im-fluss-bad-garten-am-spreekanal-donnerstag-4-mai-2023/</a> Registration under: <a href="mailto:athenais.georges@grueneliga-berlin.de">athenais.georges@grueneliga-berlin.de</a>
Saturday, 13 Mai 2023 All day At the <b>Strandbad Wannsee</b> Wannseebadweg 25, Berlin	<b>Dialog the Wannsee</b> <b>Freiluft 2023</b> - The Globetrotter Festival at Strandbad Wannsee Walking, cycling, bathing, fishing, sailing, rowing or sailing with steamers and yachts - What does nature-friendly water use look like? <a href="https://wassernetz-berlin.de/2023/03/30/dialog-am-wannsee-samstag-13-mai-2023/">https://wassernetz-berlin.de/2023/03/30/dialog-am-wannsee-samstag-13-mai-2023/</a>
Sunday, 4 June 2023 11:00 – 19:00 <b>Brandenburger Tor, Berlin</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> Environment Festival at the Brandenburger Tor</b> Next exit: FAIRkehrswende! (Fair transport transition) <a href="https://www.umweltfestival.de/">https://www.umweltfestival.de/</a>
11.10 and 12.10.2023 <b>Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad)</b>	<b>Magdeburg Water Protection Seminar 2023</b>

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Phone : +49 30 / 40 39 35 30 Fax: 20 44 468 E-mail: [wasser@grueneliga.de](mailto:wasser@grueneliga.de); Internet: <http://www.wrrl-info.de>



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The responsibility for the content of this publication lies with the authors.