



## World Water Day 2017

### River and wetland restoration instead of new dams!

World Water Day on 22<sup>nd</sup> March is an occasion to think about how important water and water ecosystems are. Environmental NGOs throughout the whole Danube River Basin are committed to protect water, rivers and wetlands.

Water has many relevant aspects for man and nature. Pure drinking water and wastewater purification are basic elements of sustainable water management. A lot of ecosystems, streams and rivers, fountains and lakes are depending on water. Agricultural development and intensification with pesticides and other chemicals, nutrients, drainage and soil erosion is major pressure. Settlements should improve their efforts on wastewater purification with regard to prevent pollution at the sources, using decentralized solutions in rural areas.

The floodings of the last years indicate that room for rivers is an important task for the next years. Natural water retention measures in the whole Danube river basin and wetland restoration along streams and rivers, especially the Danube river itself, are key elements of sustainable flood protection and management. Corridors for nature along rivers are core elements of the European green infrastructure and help to conserve European biodiversity.

Yet instead of more nature and restoration for rivers and streams of the Danube river basin we are facing more and more planned destruction of rivers and streams by new dams even in protected areas. Plans for thousands of new dams mean deterioration and destruction of rivers and are contradicting all efforts to improve river systems with their ecologically indispensable dynamics, sediment regime and continuity. The new dams are contradicting the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD), of European and national biodiversity strategies. Impacts of dams are not really

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compensable and for climate protection there are better environmental alternatives than destroying rivers!

Ongoing dam building in the Danube river basin is often justified as a means of increasing economic welfare and as a consequence of the energy turnaround increasing the renewable energy share of power generation. Although it is necessary to react on climate change it is indispensable to do this in a sustainable way. Damming rivers causes destruction for ecological functions and biodiversity of river systems and it reduces its capacities for climate change resilience and flood protection working with nature. New dam development is not sustainable but alternatives for sustainable and renewable energy production are possible and should be supported instead of financial help for dams.

To save Danube river basin ecosystem services and biodiversity it is necessary to stop new dams and it is necessary to start Danube floodplain protection, to start building and preserving the green and blue infrastructure of the Danube and its tributaries. A green and blue biodiversity corridor for the Danube main river is a core element of European habitats connectivity. We need buffer strips and corridors along rivers and streams for better flood risk management, too. These elements of an integrated flood risk management also help to reduce soil erosion and fine sediments in surface waters, keep water clean and foster biodiversity. So the sustainable solution is river and wetland restoration instead of new dams.

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