



WWF

UPDATE

2013

Sustainable Hydropower in the Dinaric Arc

Issue 5 / July 2013

Fresh water

This newsletter provides information on the latest developments of the Dinaric Arc Sustainable Hydropower Initiative (DASHI) as well as further news on freshwater and hydropower in the region. DASHI, launched by WWF in 2011, aims to reduce the adverse impacts of hydropower development in the Western Balkans and to promote good practices in the region. The Initiative focuses on the protection of the region's most precious freshwater ecosystems, in particular Ramsar wetlands such as Livanjsko Polje and Hutovo Blato in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lake Skadar shared by Albania and Montenegro.

HYDROPOWER NEWS FROM THE REGION



No new dams in ecologically sensitive parts of rivers in Danube basin

NGOs throughout the region welcomed the adoption of Guiding Principles for Sustainable Hydropower for the Danube basin at a high-level meeting of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River in Sarajevo recently. Representatives of Danube basin countries, including Austria, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia and BiH adopted guidelines for reducing the ecological damage of new hydropower projects. The document recommends keeping particularly sensitive river sections such as protected areas, stretches of high ecological status or headwaters free of hydropower development. It also promotes proper planning at national and regional levels in other sections of rivers. The Guiding Principles also suggests that hydropower plants must reduce damage to fish populations and other freshwater organisms as far as possible and explains how this can be achieved.

More on: bit.ly/10YkNp2



Identification of ecologically sensitive freshwater ecosystems in the Dinaric Arc

In June WWF's Zagreb office organized the 2nd workshop on the identification of the most important freshwater ecosystems in the Dinaric Arc. The workshop held in Sarajevo was a crucial step towards finalizing a map of the most exceptional river ecosystems in the Dinaric Arc that should be preserved from hydropower development. During the past year a GIS expert set up a methodology and conducted an in-depth analysis of almost 300 key rivers flowing through four countries – Croatia, BiH, Montenegro and Albania. The methodology and first results of the analysis were presented to key country representatives to verify the data and get the buy-in of national institutions with a role in nature conservation. In the coming months the GIS expert will finalize the maps while the WWF team prepares a publication on exclusion zones for hydropower in the Dinaric Arc.

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WWF roundtable with International Financial Institutions in Brussels

For the launch of the “Seize your power” campaign and in the framework of its DASHI project, WWF organised a round-table on Investments in Southeast Europe’s Energy Sector, in June in Brussels. The event gathered several of the major international financial institutions (IFIs) and IFI coordination units, active in the Western Balkans, as well as officials from the European Commission, Members of the European Parliament and NGOs from the region. In Southeast Europe investments in the energy sector still focus very much on fossil fuels and unsustainable hydropower projects and by providing loans to governments and the private sector, IFIs can play a significant role in steering efforts in the right direction. WWF has developed a series of recommendations addressed to two of the main IFIs active in Southeast Europe, EBRD and EIB, to communicate its stance on energy investments in the wake of major energy lending reviews launched by the two banks.

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HYDROPOWER NEWS FROM THE FIELD

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Termination of the contract with RWE for HPPs on the Drina river

The Government of the Republika Srpska and the German company RWE broke their contract on strategic partnership for hydropower development on the upper Drina river. The contract with the German company was signed last year and provided for the construction of four hydropower plants in the upper reaches of the river Drina – Buk Bijela, Foca, Paunci and Sutjeska (260 MW) – for a total value of 460 million Euros. As the conditions for the realization of the strategic partnership were not realized and certain issues remained unresolved, the partners decided to terminate the contract. Montenegro has also contested the project as some accumulations would stretch into Montenegrin territory.

More info on: bit.ly/17izq7y

Hutovo Blato



Hutovo Blato Nature Park, one of the most productive ecosystems in BiH

On Hutovo Blato Day, an annual event organised by WWF and local NGOs, WWF ran a workshop on the economic and social benefits of protected areas (PA BAT). The analysis showed that Hutovo Blato is one of the most productive ecosystems in the country as it offers a wide range of services to local communities, from water purification and flood prevention to fisheries and eco-tourism. WWF also organised several activities for the public. Before the celebration of Hutovo Blato Day, Mr. Semin Borić, the Cantonal Minister for Environmental Protection, visited Hutovo Blato for the first time in his term, having received a petition from WWF in April. The Minister expressed readiness to support all activities in the Park aimed at preserving natural resources while also ensuring sustainable economic development of the region.

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Upper Horizons - legal update

Despite the filing of a lawsuit to the District court in Banja Luka, BiH, the Federal Ministry for the Environment and Tourism received information that the investor is still implementing activities on the construction of HPP “Dabar”, the first project in the system of “Upper Horizons”. The Federal Ministry sent an official request to the court and to the construction and environmental inspection services of the Republika Srpska to order suspension of all activities until the final decision of the court. The manager of HPP “Dabar” Mr. Bratić commented that the activities will not stop and that he acts only according to the instructions of the investor. The investment in HPP “Dabar” is worth 180 million Euros with an installed capacity of 159 MW.

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Livanjsko Polje



First meeting of the Cooperative Committee of Ramsar site Livanjsko Polje

Five years after the declaration of Livanjsko Polje as wetland of international importance (Ramsar site no. 1786) it has become clear that the lack of communication and cooperation between those involved in the wetland presents a big obstacle to the sustainable development of Livanjsko Polje and the preservation of its ecological characteristics. Through the Cooperative Committee WWF and Youth Centre Livno will bring together stakeholders in the Livno area through an open discussion about the problems of this area, better mutual cooperation and coordinated planning and implementation of development programmes. The first meeting of the Committee took place recently.

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MONTENEGRO



Energy Strategy 2030 for Montenegro unsustainable and export-oriented

After public consultations, Green Home, WWF and MANS have called upon the government of Montenegro to withdraw the draft Energy Strategy 2030 until an adequate analysis has been made, realistic alternatives proposed and the proper legal process is respected. The draft Energy Strategy uses unrealistic future energy needs to justify extreme growth in energy production capacity (from 854 MW of installed capacity in 2011 to 2,327 MW in 2030) with a primary focus on fossil fuels (TPP Pljevlja and TPP Maoča), and large hydropower plants on the Morača River. These projects could have major adverse effects on the environment and health of citizens and also triple the CO₂ emissions of Montenegro. Green Home and MANS also filed a criminal lawsuit against the Minister of Economy Vladimir Kavarić for enabling the development of the Strategy and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) by firms from the COWI consortium, which is a clear breach of the law on SEA and brings the validity of the documents under serious question.

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Recommendations for sustainable development of hydropower in Montenegro

WWF and Green Home have developed guidelines for the development of sustainable hydropower in Montenegro with a document proposing a set of recommendations for various stages in the development of hydropower projects in order to ensure their sustainability. Recommendations are based on initial considerations of the DASHI project working group and a review of relevant policies, legislation and reports from various EU projects and initiatives, while the World Commission on Dams, International Hydropower Association and International Commission for the Protection of Danube River have been used as key reference points. Efforts have been made to adjust available international guidelines and recommendations to the conditions and issues relevant to Montenegro.

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CROATIA

Croatian scientists call for sustainable water management in the basins of Neretva and Trebišnjica

In April, the University of Zagreb and the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences held a roundtable “Sustainable water management in the basins of the Neretva and Trebišnjica” to discuss the environmental, economic and legal aspects of cross-border water management of these basins. Scientists looked specifically at the “Upper Horizons” project and its negative impacts on the Neretva River Delta in Croatia. They stressed the importance of preserving the natural and cultural values of the area, and proposed the formation of a nature park for the whole area. They also called for better coordination, both cross-border and cross-sector, in the management, use and protection of resources in the Neretva and Trebišnjica, and for development of a permanent system of measurement, monitoring and management of water resources in these basins.

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HEP and EBRD cancel loan agreement for Ombla hydropower plant

Croatian electricity provider Hrvatska Elektroprivreda (HEP) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) cancelled a loan agreement for the Ombla hydroelectric plant announced in May. HEP and EBRD signed a loan agreement for the construction of a HPP on the Ombla river in the Dubrovnik area of southern Croatia in 2011. HPP “Ombla” was to be the first underground power station in Croatia and would produce 68 MW of electricity and the entire project was estimated at 150 million Euros. The Ombla project met with wide public objection from environmental organisations who warned that the project was not economically viable and carried a high environmental risk factor. Environment and Nature Protection Minister Mihael Zmajlovic also said on several occasions that he objected to the construction of the Ombla and that the project documentation which was prepared in the late 1990s was not in line with environment protection standards and EU directives.

More on: bit.ly/149toIj

STAYING IN THE LOOP



Network of Aarhus centers opened in BiH

A third Aarhus center for information and public participation in the environmental field opened in Banja Luka in June. The head of the Banja Luka office of the EU Delegation in BiH Đulio Zani stressed that the EU supports NGOs, especially those dealing with the application of the Aarhus Convention, adding that Aarhus centers are extremely important because they allow access to information relating to the protection of the environment. Aarhus centers also opened in Tuzla and Sarajevo, and became part of a network of 13 centers in the region of Southeast Europe. The Aarhus centers are funded by the EU and the OSCE Mission in BiH.

More on: bit.ly/13qCev1



Study visit to EU institutions and European Commission

In May WWF organized a study visit to Brussels for water managers, representatives of nature conservation institutions, and representatives of NGOs from the Dinaric Arc region. The objective was to improve participants’ overall knowledge of EU decision-making processes and the role of EU institutions in adopting, implementing and enforcing environmental legislation/policies in the enlargement context. Participants’ specific knowledge of the required EU environmental standards for existing and new hydropower plants was also strengthened. Mladen Rudež, Deputy Minister in the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism (BiH) commented on the study visit: “The study visit provided me with additional knowledge on the importance of strategic and programmatic documents for the development of renewable energy projects, in particular, following the example of Lithuania, the necessity to identify areas – through hydrological and biological criteria – where hydropower developments should be excluded.”

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Sustainable hydropower in practice – study tour to Loire River, France

WWF organized a field visit to France for a delegation of Western Balkans public authorities and environmental NGOs to learn about the country’s shift towards sustainable hydropower and the “Convention for Sustainable Hydropower”. Participants visited the microdam of Roanne and the “new” Poutes dam on the Loire River. The Roanne microdam (2 MW) is now equipped with mitigation measures (fish ladders) that proved to be very effective: for the first time in 50 years, a salmon crossed the Roanne dam last year. The Poutes dam is being refurbished with the retaining wall being reduced from 17 meters to 4 meters, and an innovative valve system installed that will allow the transportation of sediments and the passage of migratory fish downstream, especially smolts (young salmon). The study tour ended with a visit to the National Wild Salmon Conservatory that secures wild salmon restocking until the Loire’s habitats and water quality can be restored.

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RECENT PUBLICATIONS



SEECN report sheds light on support of EU development banks for fossil fuels

According to the new South East Europe Change Network (SEECN) report “Invest in Haste, Repent at Leisure”, between 2006 and 2012, 32 times more of the €1.68 billion invested by development banks in the Western Balkans energy infrastructure went to fossil fuels than to non-hydropower-based renewables. The report found that fossil fuels accounted for 36% of all bank loans in the region and almost half of the lending from the biggest regional lender, the EBRD. More broadly, around half of the EBRD’s annual €6.7 billion of energy lending goes to fossil fuels. At the press conference organised by WWF and SEECN in Brussels, Climate Commissioner Connie Hedegaard called for development banks with a combined annual lending pot of €130 billion to end support for fossil fuels and called on the banks to increase spending on renewables and energy efficiency. The report covers Albania, BiH, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

The report is available at: bit.ly/13MJrwX



Guiding Principles on Sustainable Hydropower in Danube basin

Following a request by the Danube Ministerial Conference 2010, the ICPDR has become active in initiating a dialogue with representatives from the hydropower sector. As an essential step in this process, “Guiding Principles on Sustainable Hydropower Development in the Danube Basin” have been developed by an interdisciplinary team and were finalised and adopted in June 2013. The Guiding Principles are primarily addressed to public bodies and authorities responsible for the planning and authorization of hydropower, including those on the national, regional and local levels in charge of energy, environment and water management. The Guidelines also provide relevant information for potential investors in the hydropower sector as well as NGOs and the public.

The document is available at: bit.ly/10YkNp2

DID YOU KNOW...?



BIG JUMP marked the first “Amazon of Europe Day” in Croatia

On the occasion of the Croatian accession to the EU and the first anniversary of the proclamation of the UNESCO Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube, WWF launched a campaign to raise awareness about the importance of Croatian rivers. WWF highlighted the Seven River Wonders of Croatia which stand out because of their rich biological and landscape diversity. During the campaign WWF and partners organized several activities, presentations and events, with the biggest event on 14 July – the “Amazon of Europe Day” – on the confluence of Mura and Drava, where the Declaration for the preservation of Croatian rivers was handed to the representatives of the Ministry of the Environment and Nature Protection. The celebration was marked by the *BIG JUMP* event, with more than 100 people participating. WWF and local partners also organized a *BIG JUMP* on the Neretva river in BiH and in Serbia on the Danube.

More on: mediterranean.panda.org

You can find more information on the Dinaric Arc Sustainable Hydropower Initiative at: bit.ly/KXr1fn

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