

# DEF Bulletin

The Danube Environmental Forum Newsletter

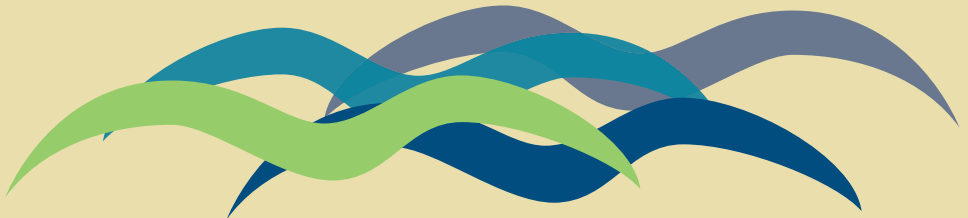
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*Sustainable inland navigation*  
*Danube week in Moldova*  
*Floods*



## IMPRESSUM

DEF Bulletin is the official publication of DEF, Danube Environmental Forum



The bulletin assists the DEF to fulfil its mission: "To protect the Danube river with its tributaries, their biodiversity and resources, by enhancing co-operation among governments, NGO, local people and stakeholders towards the sustainable use of natural ecosystems".

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**Floods are natural phenomena**

It seems that in Europe floods are the most common natural catastrophe. In last ten years Europe has suffered more than one hundred major floods. During this time, floods in Europe have claimed as many as seven hundred lives and forced more than half a million people to abandon their homes. Floods have caused also more than twenty five billion Euros in economic losses.

Much of this damage is a consequence of inadequate management of river systems, including expansion of buildings and agriculture into natural river flood areas. These floods also damage nature by destroying wetlands and reducing biological diversity. How could this have happened? The answer is quite simple. Floods can spread pollution throughout the region far way from the point of pollution, from factories, animal farms, and wastewater treatment where toxic chemicals or a huge amount of manure is present.

Floods are very common in the Danube River Basin. In last few years, almost all of the countries in the Danube River Basin have suffered from floods. An account of how floods have been dealt with in the Czech Republic is presented in Jaroslav's article.

We should keep in mind that floods are natural phenomena that cannot and should not be prevented. As well as some negative effects, floods also have positive effects on nature, by flooding meadows and floodplain forests which are important habitats for many rare and endangered species of plants and animals, and by filling stagnant ponds with fresh water.

Yours,



## Issues from an environmental NGO perspective

### Sustainable Inland Navigation - No further deterioration of River Ecosystems!

At the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pan-European Conference on Inland Waterway Transport in Bucharest, and the Informal Meeting of River (Navigation) and River Protection Commissions of the Rhine and Danube in Snagov (Romania), representatives of environmental NGOs for river protection in the framework of European River Commissions (Danube, Rhine, river Elbe, Oder) and in water and river working groups expressed their concern for future protection and restoration of European rivers.

The big European rivers are unique and indispensable ecosystems of worldwide importance. They are not only homes for threatened species such as sturgeon, salmon, and eels, they are also of great importance for drinking water, leisure and tourism, flood protection and regional water balance. They are used as waterways and for hydroelectric production. Reports on rivers serving as waterways implementing the European Water Framework Directive gave clear evidence that many stretches of the big rivers are already severely damaged or threatened by hydro-morphological alterations for navigation and related uses.

#### ***Sustainable Navigation and Modal Shift***

The navigation lobby claims inland navigation to be the most environmental friendly means of transportation.

The improvement of infrastructure of waterways must be confined to the abilities of natural rivers, to their dynamics and ecological needs. No further deterioration of river ecosystems, a strategic environmental assessment including all alternatives, as well as a cost-benefit analysis covering environmental costs with a main emphasis on river ecology, are basic demands of river protection. The project of the Danube-Oder-Elbe canal is an unacceptable and very expensive threat for the rivers and landscapes in affected countries. The planned new dam on the Labe/Elbe river at Decin is significantly damaging the river without solving the problems of navigation on the Elbe. Instead of new dams



**Floodplain forest. Photo: Milan Vogrin**

or environmentally harmful dredging for a very low amount of traffic on the waterway, a shift to railroad transportation would be a sound alternative for the upper Elbe/Labe river. The railroad has more than enough capacity to take over transport from the waterway. According to the Water Framework Directive, no deterioration is necessary or acceptable.

#### ***River Restoration, Conservation of Habitats and Species***

The big rivers with their banks, floodplains, and slopes are among the most important European lifelines of biodiversity. To take account of this, it is imperative to integrate the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the European habitat network Natura 2000. More attention to the requirements of the Biodiversity Convention and the Pan-European Strategy on Biological and Landscape Diversity is needed. For better integration of these elements, environmental NGOs and environmental and nature protection authorities and fishery institutions and organizations should be included in the development of river management plans and programmes.

Substantial restoration of rivers must not be confined to those without navigation, and restoration objectives cannot in all cases be confined by present uses. Uses should be examined for better ecological alternatives and to see if the extent of hydro-morphological and hydrological alterations is necessary and ecologically sound. Implementing the Water Framework Directive cannot include merely discussion of expansion measures, but also must include measures such as removal of dams, dikes, and embankments. River continuity and the passage of fish and sediment are among the basic elements for mitigation, but these must be accompanied by improving and enhancing river habitats, for example, with longer free-flowing stretches in chains of dams to let rheophilic river species survive. We welcome programmes for sturgeon and salmon in the Danube and Rhine river basin, but we need similar programmes referring to habitats for other species too. The reactivation of floodplains with lateral connectivity for groundwater and surface water is indispensable and gives us important synergies for flood protection.



Fire-bellied toad *Bombina orientalis*  
Photo: Milan Vogrin

#### **Public Participation, River Commissions and Environmental NGOs**

By implementing the European Water Framework Directive and by bringing authorities, users, and

protectors of rivers to one table, the international river commissions are becoming more and more important for the future of our rivers. This holds true more than ever for current river basin management plans and programmes of measures, although they are to be specified for stretches and regions along the river. Public participation and transparency in quality and intensity are basic and indispensable elements in this process of implementing the Water Framework Directive and European policies in favour of inland navigation like TEN-T.

Environmental NGOs are very much committed to the future of our rivers. They have an important task in contributing to, co-operating with, and controlling different processes of sustainable river management and river use development. Transparency requires realized participation that means unrestricted access to information, and the ability to join working groups and expert groups. This must be applied to both national and regional participation. Environmental NGOs often report a lack of real participation and adequate access to information in regions and countries. River commissions can help to improve this situation. We need real participation and intensified stakeholder discussion at both political and technical levels. Though environmental NGOs have a decisive role in implementing a strategy of sustainable development for rivers and river basins, they often lack the capacity and money to realize these tasks. Until now there have been some good offers of assistance for environmental NGOs (Danube, Rhine, Elbe), but it is uncertain whether this favorable state will continue. It is crucial to maintain and improve the capabilities and capacities of environmental NGOs for the demanding process of river basin management plans and improved sustainable use of rivers, and to enable qualified regional implementation.

#### **Endangered Rivers or New Chances for Sustainable Development and Restoration?**

The next few years will show whether it is possible to develop sustainable solutions for inland navigation and other uses for big European rivers. International river commissions and environmental NGOs are committed to a positive outcome. We do our best for the protection and

sustainable development of our rivers and river basins.

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## **Gabriel Resources Rosia Montana EIA Report: Junk Science**

*Bucharest/Romania, 24th August 2006* - Under the auspices of the Romanian Academy, Alburnus Maior today launched an independent expert analysis of the *Rosia Montana Environmental Impact Assessment Report*. Speakers included Acad. Prof. Mircea Sandulescu, an eminent geologist, Renate Weber, a former counsellor to President Basescu and President of Romania's Open Society Foundation, and Robert E. Moran, a world-renowned hydro geologist who contributed to the independent analysis.

Gabriel Resources (TSX:GBU), a small, inexperienced Canadian mining company, plans to uproot the people of Rosia Montana in order to construct Europe's largest open-cast cyanide-leach gold mine. From its outset the venture has been beleaguered by scandals, operational problems and vehement local, national and international opposition. In May 2006, Gabriel Resources submitted an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report to Romania's Ministry for the Environment and Water Management. The public consultations which commenced in late July have been heavily criticized by opinion leaders and the public who claim that they are disingenuous public relations events organized for and by Gabriel Resources.

Acad. Prof. Sandulescu, who hosted the launch, explained the long-standing position of the Romanian Academy against the Rosia Montana gold mine development. Mr. Sandulescu explained that the Romanian Academy was the first institution to warn Romania's Parliament, as well as other authorities, regarding the significant risks posed by the mine proposal to Romania's cultural patrimony as well as to the region's environment and development potential.

Mrs. Renate Weber applauded the persevering efforts of Romania's civil society to bring forward independent assessments of the Rosia Montana mine proposal, since "the persons who contributed to the EIA report are clearly not independent. It should be first and foremost the duty of the Government to watch over the independence of those preparing the EIA report."

According to Dr. Bob Moran, "The main problem with the EIA report for the Rosia Montana mine proposal is its lack of credibility. Much of its scientific base is junk science. Think about it; the EIA report was put together by people paid and directed by the mining company; if they wouldn't endorse the expected result, they would probably never get a job again".

The study entitled *Independent Expert Analysis of the Rosia Montana Environmental Impact Assessment Report* contains six main studies and can be accessed at [www.rosiamontana.ro](http://www.rosiamontana.ro) (section entitled "Expert EIA Assessment").

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## Danube week in Moldavia

As expected, in the year of the Moldavian presidency of ICPDR, the Danube celebrations were given special attention, involving the authorities and the general public on an unprecedented scale, and bringing several important organizational novelties. Thus, "Danube Day" became "Danube Week" and its emissaries were the members of the Prut expedition, organized for this occasion. Now that the event is over, we can say that Danube Week (22-29 July) and the Prut Expedition were the main events of the month of June, involving many activities that took place in several "focal points" of our country - Costesti (Rascani) and the cities of Ungheni, Leova and Cahul.

### Welcome to the left riverbank of Prut

The event took place on the morning of 22<sup>nd</sup> June,

when a large delegation from Romania, led by the Minister of Environment and Water Management, Sulфина Barbu, was welcomed to the dam of Costesti-Stanca at the Moldavian-Romanian border by a delegation of ambassadors, local representatives, ecologists, journalists, literati and residents. At the ceremony, the Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Moldova, and current president of ICPDR, Constantin Mihailescu, welcomed the Romanian guests, emphasizing the importance of Prut as part of the Danube River Basin and the necessity that people on both sides of the river should unite in their efforts to keep it clean for our generation and for the generations to come. The Romanian Minister, Sulфина Barbu, concurred, saying that "If the water of Prut is polluted, it will certainly lead to the pollution of the Danube and subsequently of the Black Sea. Thus, the responsibility for the Danube river basin is common, all the people living on the rivers Mura, Drava, Tisa, Sava and Prut being united by the same great river basin." At the celebration, we also met Petruta Moisi, the president of the Ecological Consultancy Center Galati, a long time friend and partner of the Ecological Movement of Moldova in several projects, including "Together for Prut", who told us:

"What is happening today on Prut is the dream of a generation of Romanian people on both sides of this river. When the importance of Prut is recognized at the level of the Danube River Basin, there will be projects to take care of it. The third big tributary of the Danube that passes through three countries (Moldova, Romania and the Ukraine) is a certain bridge for collaboration. My only wish is that I will be able to take part in the celebration when there is a protected area of international importance on both sides of Prut under the RAMSAR Convention."

The guests enjoyed a true celebration and appreciated many interesting discourses, admired the works of local artists as seen in exhibitions of drawings on Danube Day, and those of local craftsmen, as well as a vaulting demonstration. However, the high point of the celebrations at Costesti was the launch of the Prut Expedition 2006.



### The expedition to Prut

Organized by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Moldova and the Weather and Hydrological Service, the expedition was inaugurated by symbolically populating Prut with young fish, launching aerostats with the ICPDR logo, and throwing flowers into the river. The expedition group was composed of specialists of the Weather and Hydrological Service, representatives of the Alliance for a Clean Prut and of the Ecological Movement of Moldova, journalists, and a TV reporter who described the events

on the river and in the locations where Danube Day was celebrated. The expedition monitored the water quality of Prut and its tributaries, the state of the riverbanks, and the biodiversity of the basin. The water quality of Prut and its tributaries, Garla Mare, Ciuhur, Sarata and others, and the largest tributary, Jijia, which brings a great deal of pollution into the river, were all measured.

As a border river, Prut has kept its beauty almost intact. There are places where the only other living creatures are the birds, occasionally breaking the monotonous sound of the boat's motor with their cries, the canny dashing otters, and other small animal inhabitants looking for tasty meals, and, of course, the fish, severely complaining about the unwanted motorized intruders and their effect on parts of the river banks, caving them in and breaking the trees on both sides.

Near Horesti, Falesti, we saw that illegal tree cuts had been made in the protected area of the river. At Zagarancea, we were surprised to discover that sand had been extracted illegally from the river bed.

At Taxobeni, however, we admired the meandering of Prut, each bend more beautiful than the next, while behind us shining fish were jumping over the water.

The only thing that still concerns us is that the barbed wire on the left bank of Prut is still there, and only between Ialoveni and Giurgiulesti, where it was taken away and used, as the locals told us, for household use.

### **Night and day halts**

On the first night, the expedition pitched their tents in a glade in the scientific reserve "Padurea Domneasca", where our friend and partner Valeriu Tarigradschi prepared a tasty dinner and barbecue. On the second night, we stopped directly on the river bank, as our boat docked at the bridge near Ungheni, on a night with clear moon and skies..

The festivities continued in Leova (25 June) and Cahul (26 June), and everywhere the expedition was met with bread and salt (the traditional way of greeting guests), and invited to well-organized shows that attracted large parts of the city population. All in all, it was a true holiday complete with learning experiences.

The expedition members were met with much interest by the communities close to the focal-points of the celebration as well. For instance, at Leova, the expedition was welcomed by groups of young ecologists from the nearby villages of Tochile-Raducani, Sarata-Razesi, and some other villages in the county of Hancesti, situated in the river basin of Lapusnita, a tributary of Prut, where an Agricultural Pollution Control Project is being implemented. A large group of young people from the village of Lapusna, led by their teacher, Rodica Rotaru, also came from their summer vacation in Rusca, telling us that they had organized for Danube Day a series of activities, such as an eco-contest and a drawing contest entitled "Lapusnita Ð a clean drop in the Danube", to complement other drawing contests organized for Danube Day. Finally, at the city of Cahul, the expedition, as well as the representatives of the ICPDR, led by Mr. Philip Weller, who came from Vienna, had a private meeting with the president of the County Council, Mr. Stefan Bratu. Afterwards, everybody went on to celebrate in the city center. From here, the expedition continued its way on the river to Giurgiulesti, and some of its members went to Galati to participate in the Danube activities.

### **On the shores of Danube**

During 27-29 June, the International Conference "Past and Future in the Stability and Cooperation Institutions on the Danube" took place at Galati. Participants included Erhard Busek, Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South-Western Europe, Traian Ungureanu, Minister of External Affairs for Romania, Vasile Blaga, Minister of Administration and Internal Affairs of Romania, Sulfina Barbu, Minister of Environment of Romania, and Constantin Mihailescu, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Moldova. The latter proposed to the ICPDR that Danube Day be extended to Danube Week every year. During the Conference, the results of the Prut Expedition were presented. The president of EMM, DEF NFP Moldova, Alecu Renita, and the president of ECCG, DEF NFP Romania, Petruta Moisi, made a common declaration to the Ministers of Environment of both countries for the creation of trans-border protected areas, more complete exchange of information regarding the problems of Prut, and tighter collaboration between state



organs and NGOs in both countries. On 29<sup>th</sup> June, Danube Day was celebrated in Galati by means of a naval parade, and ships along the length of the Danube from its source to Sulina, where it flows into the sea, saluted the river with their joined sirens. There was also a paddle boat race between Braila and Galati, sports contests, and shows, all completed with fireworks late in the evening.

The Prut Expedition is primarily an effort of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources that, through its National Ecology Fund, and with the consultancy and lobbying of the EMM, has financed over 20 projects for local communities. Some organizations engaged in cleaning small rivers, others managed water sources, some cleaned the river bank of Prut, and others organized ecological summer camps. Local authorities demonstrated a high level of responsibility and became directly and actively involved in organizing the Danube Week activities, encouraging public participation and supporting the ecologists. Other organizations, from Criva, the point where Prut enters Moldova, to Giurgiulesti, where it flows into Danube, also participated in organizing the events, including the Alliance for a Clean Prut, comprising over 30 environmental NGOs dealing with Prut problems, as well as the territorial branches of EMM.

In his closing remarks, the president of EMM declared, "What happened during 22-29 June, starting from Rascani, to Ungheni, Leova, Cahul, Galati, Tulcea and then again, Galati, greatly exceeded our expectations. We were delighted that a large number of people on both sides of Prut took part in these events, including the highest European authorities, the Ministers of the Environment from both countries. Each participant showed at Galati that they really wanted to give the event the recognition it deserves, Romania having concrete responsibilities towards the EU, and the Republic of Moldova, as a neighbouring EU country, trying to improve its standards. Now, we have to confirm the resolution that we showed at this event, to take matters very seriously, and to be ready for hard work, joining the efforts of our organizations with those of the Romanian organizations so that Prut will really become one of the cleanest rivers of Europe, and the Danube, a river for which we all feel responsibility for preserving.

**Gheorghe Doni**

**Lucian Reniță**

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## Integrating Local Communities and Nature Protection in the European Green Belt

### Introduction

In 2004, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and its partners launched the European Green Belt initiative, focusing on the creation of an ecological network extending from Fennoscandia through Central Europe to South-Eastern Europe (SEE). The Green Belt aims to foster transboundary conservation and regional sustainable development along the former Iron Curtain route, thus creating a network of protected areas including their surrounding landscapes and communities.

### Gornje Podunavlje project

The first site-based project coordinated by IUCN within this initiative is titled "Integrating Local Communities and Nature Protection in the European Green Belt". This project focuses its activities on the Gornje Podunavlje Special Nature Reserve (SNR), Serbia. Gornje Podunavlje, a large wetland area located in the north-western Vojvodina Province along the left bank of the Danube River, borders the Danube-Drava National Park (Hungary) and the Kopacki Rit Nature Park (Croatia). All three sites form a large marshy complex - one of the last remaining big floodplains in Europe. Transboundary cooperation and unified measures are the key solutions for a sustainable future of this area.

This project is aimed at providing the first direct "on the ground" implementation of the overall Green Belt Programme of Work through habitat mapping and capacity building activities. The project is being implemented by IUCN Programme Office for South-Eastern Europe, in cooperation with the Institute for Nature Protection of Serbia and the Drava League.

### Project objectives

This site-based project foresees strengthening of transboundary cooperation in the Central Danube Floodplains and seeks for improvement of protected area management in the Gornje Podunavlje SNR. The specific objectives of this project are to:

- Strengthen transboundary cooperation between Serbia and Croatia;
- Raise awareness of local stakeholders and



administrations on the values and the importance of biodiversity conservation in the region;

- Build capacities for integrated PA management and rural development of all stakeholders associated with the protected area.

### Project activities

Three major sets of activities are being implemented within the "Integrating Local Communities and Nature Conservation in the European Green Belt" project:

- A new habitat inventory and mapping of the Gornje Podunavlje SNR according to internationally recognized habitat classifications;
- Conduct consultations among local stakeholders and administrations concerning the integration of biodiversity protection with sustainable rural development; and
- Hold a workshop for all key stakeholders to discuss results of the project activities.

The new habitat inventory and mapping will provide an overview of the status quo and the distribution of habitats in the reserve. A list of



restoration sites of primary importance should serve as a valuable preparatory basis for future management planning and for integration of Gornje Podunavlje SNR into one of the international ecological networks. An aggregated habitat classification has been accomplished according to EUNIS classification, and the first joint field trips of experts from Croatia and Serbia have been organized.

Certainly, one of the project's strong points are communication activities, foreseen and implemented at various levels, focusing mainly on dissemination and information exchange with local and regional stakeholders. Thus, IUCN was recently invited to present project activities at the Bodrog Fest Đ a local festival of food, music and tradition in Backi Monostor (Serbia), which gathered representatives from various local communities presenting their traditions, handicrafts and cultural heritage, NGOs, international organizations, PA authorities, politicians, etc.

This IUCN project also corresponds with other projects under implementation in the region, such as the WWF project "Ecotourism as a tool for improving nature management in the Middle Danube Floodplains spanning Hungary, Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro", and IUCN's "Pan-European Green Belt Mapping" project. Since they are implemented in harmony and mutual understanding, these projects create strong synergies that contribute to each of the mentioned project's goals.

Having in mind all these issues, it is foreseen



All photos: Boris Erg

that all activities in the project will result in improved transboundary cooperation and capacity building among protected area management

and local stakeholders. This cooperation will be essential for the development of successful management plans, improved protection of the area and greater integration of local communities. Subsequently, the results of this project will be communicated throughout the entire Green Belt in Europe.

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## The Little Tern Festival on the Drava river

The Drava league and the community of Gola with their national and international partners organized the second Little Tern Festival on Saturday, August 19. The Festival drew public attention to the important and well preserved biological diversity of the river Drava in Koprivnica-Križevci county. Numerous foreign and local participants were joined by thirty cyclists arriving from the county seat, Koprivnica. Their trip to Molve was organized by the Koprivnica Ecological Society in the scope of the summer project: Cycling the Drava Region. The cyclists also visited the former breeding site of the Little Tern in the Molve area.

During the festival, the importance of Little Tern habitats on the river Drava was stressed by four visiting experts from Austria, Slovenia and



Croatia. Once again, it was pointed out that the Drava is one of only four European rivers still retaining enough natural dynamics to enable the nesting of the Little Tern on its gravel banks. Darko Grlica, Drava League president, who is currently engaged in Little Tern monitoring, regretfully declared that only two pairs were seen breeding this summer on the entire river course. Therefore, the preservation of the natural river



course with its ever changing gravel banks, inaccessible to people and predators, is of extreme importance. The presence of the Little Tern on the Drava proves the natural status of the river.

Living rivers have become extremely scarce in Europe, and they are currently protected by European legislation. The Drava should therefore become part of the Natura 2000 network. Mr. Neven Trenc, of the State Institute for Nature Protection, talked about the expert proposal for protection of the Drava which is currently being prepared and which will hopefully be accepted by the Croatian Parliament, while Dragan Radović, manager of the Ornithology Institute, pointed out the necessity of permanent collaboration between ecological non-governmental organizations and state institutions in nature protection programmes.

A very enthusiastic presentation of the European Stork Villages as an example to follow in the development of the concept of the Little Tern Villages by Borut Štumberger of Slovenian DOPPS, engaged the immediate response of all participants. The festival is becoming a local tradition and hopefully will include more communities along the river. Good news was announced by Arno Mohl of WWF Austria, who recently visited the Molve region and saw several new gravel banks in the river course, ideal for the nesting of the Little Tern.

**Helena Hecimović, Drava league**

## Danube Art Master 2006 in the Czech Republic

The winner of the “Danube Art Master 2006” competition in the Czech Republic is a group of three students, Anna Doubková, Veronika Konečná and Eva Zet'ková, from the grammar school in Jihlava (about 100 km west of Brno). The winning work of art, named “Endangered Fish”, was created purely from material found in or around the river, reflecting the lights and shadows of the river water and symbolising the limited environment the fish live in.

The winning group later enjoyed, as part of the first prize, a boat trip along the Danube River between Budapest and Szentendre.

A record number of around 550 participants from 29 Moravian schools made a trip to the water environment to create nearly 250 pieces of art.

**Miroslav Husťák, Union for the Morava River, E-mail: miroslav.husak@atlas.cz**

**The winning work of art**





## Danube Day 2006 in the Czech Republic

Smiling children, surprised passers-by - these were typical features of the celebrations of Danube Day 2006 in the central Moravian town of Kroměříž (in the eastern part of the Czech Republic). The Union for the Morava River provided, together with a local partner, boat trips along the Morava River, while the folk band "Veronica" from Brno contributed to the pleasant summer atmosphere. An exhibition of artworks from the Danube Art Master 2006 school competition, and distribution of information material related to the water environment, were other activities of that day.



**Miroslav Husták, Union for the Morava River**

**One of the organisers of Danube Day 2006 (in the background) is desperately wondering how to pack so many children and their parents into relatively small boats.**

## Towards the protection of the swamp area near Novi Sad

Novi Sad lies on the left bank of the river Danube at the 1255<sup>th</sup> kilometre of its flow. The city was mentioned by this name for the first time in 1748. Today, Novi Sad is a city where underground waters run shallow. Basements, therefore, can be found only in very old houses and buildings, and even the most modern buildings do not make use of this technology. Even today, the remains of marshy fields and channels



can be found in the city. As a result, some of the goals of recent urbanisation plans include drainage and the construction of new residential blocks. In order to regulate drainage, the existing Danube - Tisa - Danube channel, which runs through the eastern part of Novi Sad, flowing into the Danube just near the city, is a great help.

Throughout the course of development and expansion of the city, there have been some miscalculations. Near the Novi Sad - Subotica motorway, on the way to Rumenka, there are 150 hectares of field covered with grass and swamps which lie between blocks of flats and the City cemetery. A channel connecting one of the DTD Channels and the Danube runs through this area, so that there is a constant inflow of fresh water, and the area cannot become either swamp or dry.

The area does not have a proper name. It is partly bounded by what used to be concrete landing strips, which can be walked down even today, and which used to be part of Novi Sad airport "Jugovičevo" that ceased to exist at the beginning of the World War II.

In order to determine its flora and fauna, biol-

ogy graduates Lidija Lončar and Nikola Stojić, members of the Society "Vrelo", paid an unofficial visit to the site at the beginning of 2002. They came to the conclusion that the flora is mainly that of steppes and marshes, including reeds, iris, thistle and other plants that live on marshy land.



The footprints of rabbits, roe deer, hedgehogs, moles, field mice, water rats and turtles can be seen in the area. Many frogs live in the swamps and channels, and a large number of various fish species spawn here. Moreover, eighteen different bird species can be seen in this area, and more than a half of them nest here. Some birds rest here on their way south. However, three endangered species have been spotted in this location e.g. *Ixobrychus minutus*, *Anas crecca*, *Circus cyaneus* and *Circus aeruginosus*. At dusk, bats are swooping through the air just above walkers' and fishermen's heads.

Because it serves as a sanctuary for so many species of plants, birds, and animals, it is necessary to protect this area. The fact that the city is nearby (4 km to the centre) and that it is expanding and surrounding the swamp very quickly, however, make it difficult to ensure the preservation of the variety of species present and the need for verdant areas.

Therefore, in November 2003 the Society "VRELO" pleaded with the Institute for Nature Protection of Serbia that experts visit the swamp and field area of "Stari Aerodrom" in order to determine its value and importance, as well as the possibility of protecting and preserving it as a place where birds can stop to rest and as a sanctuary for numerous endangered species.

One of the ideas, should there be no other

alternative, is that the area be turned into an educational centre for children. There would be paths around it which would be used for tours and observation, as well as open classrooms that would not disturb the area's natural life.

The request was granted, and in 2004 and 2005, during the vegetation period, teams from the Institute for Nature Protection of Serbia - Novi Sad Department, visited the swamps and fields several times. At the moment their professional report is expected. After receiving it, the Society "VRELO" will address the Local government with a Project for protection of "Stari Aerodrom" - an official plea to protect the whole, or at least a part of, this area from being populated and polluted.



All photos: Aleksandar Obrovski.

A local newspaper, "The Gradjanski list", has supported the planned activities of the Society "VRELO". The two continue to cooperate, and the newspapers publish all the relevant information. Several TV programmes about this area have been broadcast by various city and regional networks. In its programme on ecology, The National Broadcasting Network dedicated a 20-minute episode to the "Stari Aerodrom" area which was rerun several times.

We are aware that the protection and preservation of an area is a long process, but we hope to have enough time to be understood in order to protect this unique natural resource near the town centre from destruction.

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## Sava Day 2006 in Slovenia

Protecting the purity of water resources is especially important nowadays. The decade from the year 2005 to the year 2015 is dedicated to protection of water resources worldwide and numerous projects have taken place to promote this endeavour.

Students from the Secondary Education Centre of Biotechnology, Technical Grammar and Veterinary Nursing School (Biotehniški izobraževalni center Ljubljana) have prepared a project of their own in order to introduce this problem to people living in Ljubljana. The aim of the project is to let people know that the way every individual lives his or her life has an impact on nature and consequently on the purity of water. It is a simple fact that everybody likes to drink fresh, clean water, but nobody really knows where that water comes from, at least not until there is a pollution problem. Clean water is not something we should take for granted; people should realize that they themselves can ensure that their households will be able to use clean water in the future. Our actions will echo in the future; why should we deny the generations to come the luxury of being able to drink fresh water from the tap?

This year we prepared the second consecutive celebration of International Sava Day under the title "Water is Everything for Everyone" in cooperation with DEF, the Ministry for the



Environment and the Municipality of Ljubljana. Our goal is to heighten public awareness concerning problems of pollution and lack of drinking

water. The main event took place on the first of June, International Sava Day, in front of the Municipality House in Ljubljana. Students decorated the place with posters and signs that they made themselves. Like last year, they made a dragon of stones painted green as a symbol of water protection. This year's novelty was an installation called "Polluted River", which our girls produced on the pavement with coloured



All photos: Sava Osole

chalks and with paper fish in it. The fish did not have it easy, because their make-believe river became polluted in no time. Signs alongside the river were rather cynical: "Go ahead, if everybody can throw trash into the river, so can you!" And people did! All this was to make people realize that rivers are often used as dustbins, and even sewers.

Students gave passers-by information sheets describing the problem and basic information about water conservation. As we had many foreign tourists visit us, we also prepared an English translation for them. As expected, we had many visitors who acknowledged our efforts; especially welcome were the press, (see article in *Delo*, 2.6.2006) and our former mayor, Mrs. Danica Simšič, who expressed her support for our cause and gave everybody a dragon badge, the symbol of our capital. An old legend has it, she told us, that the dragon protects Ljubljana from all evil, and we sincerely hope that it is true.

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## Public Participation in River Sava Management Planning and Implementing EU Water Legislation

At the beginning of 2006, a new regional project started in the river Sava watershed area with the purpose of involving the public in the ongoing process of implementing European water legislation. Naturally, this includes the Water Framework Directive and management planning for the River Sava.

The River Sava is the third longest tributary of the Danube, and it flows through four European countries which used to belong to one state but today are at very different stages in the process of accession to the European Union. On one hand, this makes the Sava Region very challenging and interesting, but on the other very problematic.

"As members of the international NGO network *Danube Environmental Forum*, we recognized the same ideas and objectives in our four countries and therefore applied for Regional Grants within

the *Danube Regional Project* launched by the *Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe*," says Igor Palandžić, "and shortly afterwards we started to work on realizing the project's objectives."

The title of the project is "Strengthening NGO participation in EU WFD implementation in the Sava River Basin." The education of representatives of environmental NGOs, relevant institutions, and interested individuals active in the field of the WFD and its practical implementation will be carried out in the course of the project timeframe. It is worth mentioning that this Directive is the first one to take into account public participation as a key element for successful implementation, so we took this as the basis of our project.

The project partners are Green Action from Croatia as the leading NGO, the Center for Environmentally Sustainable Development (CESD) from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Society of Bird Research and Nature Protection (DPPVN) from Slovenia, and DEF Serbia and Montenegro. All project activities were implemented in parallel



River Sava in Belgrade. Photo: Milan Vogrin

in all four countries except for those, such as an international workshop and multilingual publication, that were carried out by all the partners together.

"This one-year project established an informal 'International River Sava NGO Committee' that should be able to actively participate in the development of the Sava River Basin Management Plans. This is the best way of informing the public and representing public interests as well as the interests of nature protection, which are very often neglected," says Mirjana Bartula.

The informal NGO Committee will be active after finishing the project, and it will monitor the process of management planning for the River Sava at the national and international levels.

A multilingual publication on topics related to the River Sava (including nature, problems, and solutions) enhanced by numerous pictures was published with the aim of introducing inhabitants of the Sava River Basin to the importance of river protection, current and possible future problems, and ways of handling them. "Since a picture is worth a thousand words, the most effective presentation of beauty or environmental problems of a certain area can be made by pictures," says Milan Vogrin, a prolific photographer.

"We succeeded in achieving all the objectives we identified in the project, and I really hope that public participation will be an obligation for every decision making process in environmental protection, and especially in water protection as an essential natural resource," says Irma Popović.

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### **Three large floods in the Czech Republic within the last nine years**

The third of three major floods in the last nine years in the Czech Republic did not reach the scope of the two previous ones (in 1997 and 2002 respectively); nevertheless the response of state officials was highly worrying. The Czech prime minister spread the same demagoguery about the supposed need for new reservoirs as the

"concrete" water-management lobby had been spreading at the height of the floods in 1997. Again, it was possible to hear in the news what a tragedy it was that water had been flooding forests, meadows and fields in the floodplains.

In 2000, after an assessment of the 1997 floods, a relatively progressive government strategy was adopted for flood prevention, including enabling water spillage in the floodplains during floods and increasing retention capability of the particular river basins. Technical means such as building reservoirs or polders were to be undertaken as a last resort. After some hesitation about the causes and consequences of the floods, many water-management experts managed to overcome their prejudices and reconsider their "reservoir-like" attitude towards flood prevention. Even experts from the Union for the Morava River were encouraged to prepare a "scenario" of effectiveness of ecological flood prevention measures; by reforestation and grassing, the flood culmination could have been reduced by 10%; landscape restructuring and forest renovation could have brought further opportunity for the reduction of flood culmination.

However, the reality was different. Despite the above mentioned proposals, water courses struck by floods in 1997 and 2002 witnessed stupid bureaucratic decisions that wasted billions of Czech crowns (hundreds of millions of euros). The Czech finance ministry only financed activities leading to renewal of the pre-flood state (which had not been able to resist the floods) and did not allow combining these finances with financial means for alternative flood-prevention measures.

Planning processes leading to elimination of the harmful effects of floods (such as loss of life and property damage) are tightly interwoven with the creation of River Basin Management Plans within the implementation of the Water Framework Directive in the relevant countries. Currently, it is of high importance to involve the public in the process of Main River Basin Management Plans. In the Czech Republic, the deadline for public participation and presenting comments was July 3, 2006.

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## Socioeconomic considerations with respect to the Ten-T Development Plans for the Danube

**General level of the problem.** In the field of inland waterway transport development (IWT), we (MAKK – the Hungarian Environmental Economics Centre) must find a way to combine two indirect effects. Both effects concern the impact on society of environmental changes. We must find a compromise so as not to lose on the ground, in terms of river damage, what we have gained in the air through the reduction of pollution. The best overall results can be expected by applying the fewest possible river regulations along with the most possible market regulations.

Trying to satisfy higher future transport demand with only waterway intervention is a supply-side solution. It is like building power plants to meet forecasted energy demands without the application of energy-saving measures or pricing schemes in order to decrease consumption. This type of solution does nothing to tackle the root cause of the problem.

The volume of IWT has changed little in absolute terms in recent decades in the EU. What has changed, and reached a dramatically high level, is the volume of road transportation and the harm, and cost to society, it causes. The harm of transport reduces the increase in well-being that trade provides. The growing intensity of transport (which exceeds the growth rate in the GDP of the EU) is a serious sign to be aware of. This is why we emphasize that this issue is not a nature vs. ships problem. The problem is rooted in inappropriate transport policy and in inappropriate management of transport on the level of the EU's common market.

**Problems with the concept of how IWT should be developed.** The shift from road to rail and IWT transport decreases environmental pressure. It would be reasonable to make this shift, but it is also important how we make it. Important aspects of this shift include market regulation, the development of port infrastructure and other services, and river construction works to promote change in the narrow or wider sphere of the IWT sector.

If the goal of a modal shift is achieved by

increasing waterway capacity, the measures taken have an effect on the natural processes of the river itself. The process of bottleneck elimination generates a degradation of the river over time without offering a comprehensive solution for the existing network. The degradation is advanced by each attempt at bottleneck elimination. This process is very destructive because it harms the base ecological network of the water basin. This is the network that provides a wide range of services for society, so its deterioration puts an unnecessary burden on public resources.

Because the disturbance or hindrance of these processes causes degradation of the ecological production of the river valley, it results in the loss and decreasing use of environmental resources among a wide range of stakeholder groups. These costs, and the cost of the development programme itself, must be compared to the gains achieved by the modal shift of transport. We have to keep in mind that in this conflict the costs are dispersed and the gains are concentrated, but the balance is not clarified.

The evaluation of conditions in the IWT sector is not intended for the IWT sector itself, but for society, because of the beneficial effects we can provide as a result. From this point of view the goal of the development programme is not to provide higher profitability by increasing transport volumes in the current circumstances, but to create a transport structure that delivers these social benefits. The profitability of each transport sub-sector is a side condition. Extra-industry considerations and interests can be communicated by means of regulations

**The real problems of the IWT sector are structural, and cannot be solved by capacity increases.** The removal of bottlenecks as a development tool for tackling the present problems of the IWT sector is a necessarily bad response to a question raised among false conditions. There is huge pressure for efficiency exerted on the IWT sector by other competing modes of transport, but this is a biased competition because the different transport modes pay different rates (or nothing) for the infrastructure they use and for the damage they cause to nature and society. Moreover, there is no effective enforcement that drives the transport sector



toward multi-modal (combined) transportation solutions. The only way the IWT sector can keep up with its competitors is by increasing its efficiency through better use of load-space and operational time, and reduction in operational (mainly personnel) costs. This leads to growing pressure on navigable time intervals, reduction of, and changes to, crews, bigger ships, and efforts towards the reconstruction of the river in order to be suitable for these needs. This is how a bad market structure forces actors to realise individual gains by generating additional costs for society. This is why it is essential to redefine the conditions of the transport sector as a whole in a common market with regard to the direct and indirect effect of its operations on nature and society.

Although recent analyses call for the better integration of IWT potential into multimodal transport solutions, this approach does not take an important fact into consideration. As an independent modal network, IWT can exist only in a limited geographical area (in the ARA seaport area and its hinterland) where waterway network conditions are particularly favourable. This is only one part of the existing corridors, and in fact the smaller part. On other waterway segments, among current market conditions the sector cannot act alone, only in co-operation with other modes of transport. Without this co-operation, better use of navigation on the existing network cannot be achieved. The conditions for this co-operation must be set outside the market, taking into consideration wider platforms of interests. What is desperately needed is an EU-level regulation for setting up sustainable conditions for the whole transport sector.

Capacity increases alone cannot solve the problem. The problem is mainly represented by the low level of intermodal co-operation. Waterway capacity increases are intended to close the gaps in infrastructure characteristics between traffic networks, but this is an unrealistic goal. The degree of difference will always remain, or even increase, because of other projects of the TEN-T itself.

It is also important to mention that the IWT suppliers are not flexible. The low ability of the sector to adapt and to service new market segments under present conditions is an important factor of its recent low market share, among

the above listed external conditions. This internal problem gives a basis to the threat that waterway capacity increases without structural changes just reproduce the current problems on a higher-cost-level infrastructure.

**The necessary role of public involvement in the decision-making process.** A deal is needed in order to set out which stakeholder groups will have a share of the benefits of the transportation shift away from roads and the adaptation of the river, and who will bear the costs.

In a common transport policy, the EU decision makers must clarify how much of the realisable social benefits they are willing to sacrifice in order to compensate the IWT sector for the unexploited efficiency gains that are needed to preserve rivers with their fundamental characteristics and benefits to society. The measure and method of this compensation can open the way for the IWT sector to evaluate its own adaptation policy. Without clarification of this point, the development process will result in a more profitable IWT sector (for a while), but not in a sustainable solution for the river and for the whole of society.

Recent debates on further intervention in the rivers have not achieved a balance with respect to the results of the former series of interventions. The current situation is merely a phase in a long-lasting process of degradation, together with its ecological and social consequences. There is no clear legal framework governing how the public can uphold its widespread, long-term interests in the existence of river (and floodplain) quality in the face of concentrated conflicts. This is why the planning instructions of the Water Framework Directive and the completion of the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment on the Danube water-basin level are so badly needed in order to create a comprehensive framework for the discussion of interventions such as TEN-T.

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*Obituary*

## David Reeder

1945-2006

*David Reeder, senior technical advisor for the WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme, the most enthusiastic protector of the floodplains of Central European rivers, and a friend to all who met him at least once, died suddenly in Wales on 15 September 2006.*

*David was born in Wales. After much travel across the world and many different jobs, Hungary became his second home during the 1990s. He worked for the Ormansag Foundation until 2001, when he became a member of the WWF-Danube Carpathian Programme team. He lived in Budakeszi on the picturesque outskirts of Budapest until 2005, when he came to Pereked, a very small village hidden in the colorful hills of Hungarian Baranya. He spent almost all of his life traveling; nobody remembers him as an office-worker. His working environment was the impressive and preserved floodplain forests and gravel banks of the Croatian and Hungarian Drava, endless Carpathian forests,*



**Photo: Goda Zoltan/Bite Baja**

*green Danube Delta reedbeds, picturesque traditional villages in Serbia, and the strong waves of the Blue Danube. Nobody could connect the numerous NGOs, conservation-oriented individuals and reasonable and achievable nature protection goals in the way that he did. His role model was the Strong Blue River. In the same way that the Danube connects the countries in which David worked (Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia and, more recently, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and the Ukraine), he connected protected areas, local people, conservation officials and non-governmental organizations, working in grassroots organizing and freshwater conservation, as well as developing ecotourism and other sustainable opportunities for local development. He was closely involved in the development of the Drava League, a network of NGOs across a number of countries working to protect the Drava, "the green heart of Europe," as he liked to call this river.*

*Everybody who met David loved him. There was no other way. His untiring enthusiasm, warm smile, and incredible number of practical solutions for what I considered to be huge problems impressed me all the time I worked with him. It was impossible to match his rhythm, fast but logical and directed. Tragically, this rhythm suddenly faltered in late July when he felt the first symptoms of what was later diagnosed as cancer.*

*There are many unfinished projects that he led and inspired, messages that should be sent, recommendations that should be given, and people who should be met. Do not worry, our friend, we will do that for you. Rest in peace!*

**Marko Tucakov**



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# DANUBE RIVER BASIN

