



Main conclusions

of the participants of the International Conference

Towards a Shared Vision for the Sava River

Zagreb, Croatia, 4-5 November 2009

Introduction

These conclusions were discussed and agreed upon between participants of the International Conference “Towards a Shared Vision for the Sava River”, held in Zagreb, Croatia, on 4-5 November 2009, in the frame of the Life III countries project “Protection of Biodiversity of the Sava River Basin Floodplains” co-funded by the LIFE-Third Countries programme, SDC, and LNV. The Conference was organised by IUCN and with support of Wageningen International as well as other project partners - the State Institute for Nature Protection (Croatia), the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia, the Center for Ecology and Natural Resources of the Faculty of Science in Sarajevo (BiH), the Agricultural Institute of Republic of Srpska (BiH), the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, and Orbicon.

The Conference brought together around 100 participants including policy-makers, scientists, water managers, nature conservationists, and land users from Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia, including representatives of the European Commission, as well as various international and non governmental organizations (UNESCO, ICPDR, The Ramsar Secretariat, WWF etc.).

The immediate objectives of the Conference included:

- presenting the outcomes of the Life III countries project on the Sava River floodplains;
- sharing experiences and knowledge between different sectors involved in the management of the Sava River;
- discussing future steps towards integrated river basin management of the Sava River.

The participants agreed that to ensure effective integrated river basin management planning it is necessary to sustain the results of the Life III project “Protection of Biodiversity of the Sava River Basin Floodplains”, and proposed the following concrete actions:

- to establish a Stakeholder Council for the Sava River, by extending the existing Stakeholder Council for the Middle Posavina region;
- to establish a network of protected areas; the managers of protected areas to regularly meet and exchange information on the protection and management of PAs;
- to strengthen the cooperation of the Institutes for Nature Conservation from Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (CEPRES, Institute for the Protection of Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage of the Republic of Srpska) by signing an agreement on:
 - the maintenance of the Sava River database, currently hosted by the State Institute for Nature Conservation (Croatia);

- the designation of additional protected areas to support the establishment of an ecological network along the Sava River, particularly taking transboundary context into account;
 - the exchange of scientific data and the results of habitats and species monitoring along the Sava River;
 - the joint support to the elaboration of the Integrated River Basin Management Plan for the Sava River Basin;
 - the promotion of the protection and re-introduction of traditional autochthonous cattle breeds wherever applicable;
 - the elaboration of an Action Plan to halt the dispersal of invasive species.
- to elaborate a joint plan for sustainable tourism development along the Sava River, in close cooperation with the government bodies responsible for tourism, and to include the plan into the work of the protected areas network, as well as market the Sava River and its protected areas as a destination for nature friendly tourism.

Emerging research and management issues:

- foster research on the impacts of climate change and global warming on the precipitation and discharge patterns in the Sava River Basin;
- assess the possibilities and needs to enlarge current floodplains to increase resilience against floods and droughts and restore biodiversity;
- support active communication with and high involvement of stakeholders and local communities in management planning and implementation processes;
- improve cross-sectoral cooperation and integration of biodiversity and conservation principles into the integrated management planning process;
- to make the Sava River basin a model for transboundary integrated flood control system based on natural alluvial wetlands providing people with security and ensuring their well-being;
- enforce and, when necessary, design agri-environmental support payments and proper land tenure schemes in order to support traditional land use practices;
- continue designation of protected areas and/or Ramsar sites;
- assess ecosystem functions and values along the Sava River;
- develop green or pro-biodiversity businesses.

Additional recommendations for action:

Research

- strengthen research on the relations between the infrastructure projects, river dynamics and the dependent landscape and biodiversity;
- strengthen research on the impacts of climate change on the discharge patterns of the river Sava;
- strengthen the capacities to implement relevant European legislation, particularly the EU Water Framework and the EU Birds and Habitats Directives;
- research the cultural history of the area to be taken into consideration in the management of the area;
- ongoing research into habitat identification, flora inventories and fauna inventories based on a gap analyses of current knowledge to gain full insight in the biodiversity and the dispersal possibilities of key elements of biodiversity along the Sava River;
- research into the ecosystem services of the area including quantification and valuation of the flood prevention and the forest resources;
- focus in more depth on economic and social aspects of the area;
- investigate the processes of the dispersal and ecology of invasive species and the consequents for the ecosystems.

Management

- assess current management structures relevant for the management of protected areas along the Sava;
- integrate management planning in the agriculture, tourism, forestry, nature conservation, energy and spatial planning sectors; clear responsibilities and good coordination are required i.e. inter-ministerial working group for an integrated river basin management planning;
- address pollution with pesticides and other chemical and organic substances;
- develop tourism harmonised with the protection of biodiversity; more focus on the protection of cultural and historical features and landscapes;
- use the existing and design proper agri-environmental measures to support farmers to use autochthonous cattle breeds and to maintain farming in the Sava River floodplains where appropriate, to introduce organic agriculture and promote specific product branding;
- strengthen cooperation with the forest sector to harmonize forest management with nature conservation requirements and to assess possibilities to reintroduce forest grazing in selected forest areas;
- make more use of local knowledge generated for centuries for management planning.

NOTE: Conclusions of the working group sessions are available at <http://www.savariver.com/conference/presentations.html>



Protection of Biodiversity of the Sava River Basin Floodplains

To secure the integration of the protection of ecological values along the Sava into the management of the Sava River, IUCN, Wageningen International with technical support from Orbicon have jointly initiated the project Protection of Biodiversity of the Sava River Basin Floodplains to support the Sava River countries in identifying, designating and managing the biological and landscape diversity along the Sava River and in supporting the implementation of the EU Birds, Habitats, and Water Framework Directives. Project partners include IUCN, Wageningen International, the State Institute for Nature Protection (Croatia), the Center for Ecology and Natural Resources of the Faculty of Science in Sarajevo, the Agricultural Institute of Republic of Srpska, the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia, with an additional expert contribution provided by Orbicon and the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation.