



LIFE PROJECT LOWER MORAVA FLOODPLAINS

Project area

Lower Morava floodplains
between Angern and the
Confluence at Markthof

Project period

October 2011 – October 2019

Project partner

via donau – Österreichische
Wasserstraßen-Gesellschaft mbH
Umweltverband WWF Österreich
Niederösterreichischer
Landesfischereiverband

Project supporters

European Union
Regional Government of Lower
Austria
Federal Ministry of Agriculture,
Forestry, Environment and Water
Management

Budget

3,7 Mio. € (50% from EU)

Contact

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The Morava is the largest left-side tributary of the Upper Danube in Central Europe and Austria's only near natural lowland river with Pannonian character. The frequent flooding is essential for the floodplain's grassland and forests. Due to regulation and intensification measures in the last century the river is now classified only with a moderate status (according the EC Water Framework Directive) and habitats for endangered species of fauna and flora are limited.

Within the EC supported Life+ project "**Restoration of the Lower Morava Floodplains**" ambitious restoration measures will be implemented between 2011 and 2019.

The aim of the project is to extensively restore near-natural river dynamics in the Lower Morava floodplains, as well as to foster land-use practices, which preserve biodiversity and to specifically preserve endangered species and types of habitats.

Detailed objectives

- The most important objectives are the redynamisation, the reestablishment of the characteristic island landscape and the improvement of the connectivity between river floodplains in the confluence area of the Morava floodplains. Therefore artificially cut off river branches are reconnected, riprap and traverse barriers will be removed.
- In the floodplain area the objectives focus on the extensification of land use by converting cropland into grassland in the open landscape surrounding the river restoration measures. The cultivation of relicary floodplain water bodies will be optimised in terms of conservation needs. Furthermore there will be measures to improve the conservation status of the floodplain forest by controlling the introduction and dispersal of invasive alien species like Maple Ash (*Acer negundo*).



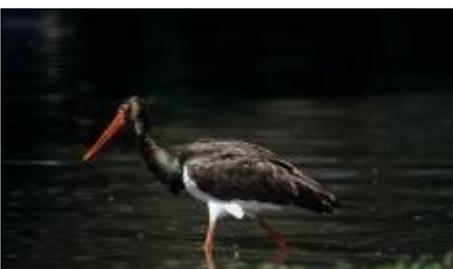
6 sidearms will be re-established in the project area.



A net of water bodies with episodic stream flow ("Sutten") is habitat of amphibians and wading birds.



Extensification and re-establishment of the traditional land use by reintroducing of grazers



Specific conservation measures for endangered species, e.g Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) will be implemented.

- Implementation of an innovative grassland management by reintroducing grazers (e.g. Konik horses) in the WWF floodplain reserve near Marchegg.
- Identification of a framework for a sustainable, cross-border fisheries management at the Morava.
- Furthermore, specific measures for the preservation of characteristic and highly endangered habitats and species (e.g. Storks, Kites, Eagles and Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)) will be implemented.
- Improvement and stabilization of the population of the European weather loach (*Misgurnus fossilis*), a characteristic species of lowland rivers, by offspring.

Around 70% of the total project budget is spent on specific conservation measures and basic assessment and analysis, around 15% on purchase of land and compensation payments and further 15% on the project management.

Expected results

By reestablishing the characteristic island landscape in the Morava confluence area altogether 6 km of river branches will be revitalized and 4 artificially cut off branches will be reconnected. This will benefit the fish fauna as well as aquatic birds.

The improvement of hinterland crosslinking during floods by removing transverse barriers especially benefits endangered floodplain forest habitats and amphibians.

From the protection of 15 relictary floodplain water bodies with episodic stream flow in the outer floodplains benefits amphibians, crustaceans (e.g. Triops) and aquatic birds.

All in all there are measures of conservation and re-dynamisation on an area of about 200 ha. That benefits at least 7 pan-European endangered habitats, 11 species of the EC Habitats Directive and 15 species of the Birds Directive.

Further information: www.life-march.at

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