



Press release

Almost all fish species back in the Rhine. Salmon: Improve access to habitats and reduce illegal catches

ICPR Plenary Assembly in Schaffhausen

Schaffhausen, 2 July 2009

Redevelopment measures targeted at improving the Rhine water quality have made many species return to the watershed. As far as fish are concerned, the species composition is almost complete. That is what the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine stated with satisfaction during its Plenary Assembly in Schaffhausen on 1 and 2 July 2009. Some specific measures are required in order to enable salmon to really re-colonize the Rhine watershed: Improve the access to the Rhine watershed from the sea passing by the sluices of the Haringvliet. The target year for this improvement as well as for improved access to the salmon habitats in the tributaries to the Upper Rhine is 2015. Also, the implementation of prohibiting salmon catches in the entire Rhine must be improved. Many more important issues were discussed in Schaffhausen.

The most recent biological inventories in the main stream of the Rhine (see www.iksr.org) show that the distinctive success of restoration measures in the field of water quality have made many species return to the river; as far as fish are concerned, the species composition is almost complete today. However, many plant and animal species which used to be typical of the Rhine watershed are still absent or only present in small numbers or restricted to local areas. In particular, the stock of migratory fish still requires intensive support. That means that, in order for the water biocoenosis to further regenerate, our rivers must become more nature-near and obstacles must be removed.

Based on these results and on a holistic fish-ecological analysis including priority measures for the further development and spreading of the stock of salmon, sea trout, allice shad and lamprey, the ICPR presented new proposals for measures aimed at the further development of the Rhine ecosystem, in particular for the programme on salmon restoration.

Improve the access from the sea and to suitable habitats

It is important to improve the access to the Rhine watershed from the sea passing by the sluices of the Haringvliet. Appropriate measures will be implemented by 2015. Therefore, as a matter of priority, potential fish habitats in the Upper Rhine and the Rhine tributaries should be made accessible and obstacles to migration should be made surmountable. Once they are accessible, tributaries apt for the target species are immediately re-colonized. It is now up to the different states to decide on the measures to implement by 2015 or 2020/2027.

Improved implementation of the interdiction of salmon catches in the states

It is also important to reduce the pressure of fishery on the stock of salmon. In the entire Rhine watershed, salmon and sea trout catches and the withdrawal of these species from the water bodies are prohibited. However, investigation results point out that salmon often figure among the by-catches of professional fishermen along the Dutch coast. Sports fishermen equally illegally catch and withdraw salmon from the main stream of the Rhine. As this situation gives rise to concern, the ICPR has issued recommendations for the implementation of these interdictions on a national level. Among others, it is recommended to raise awareness of all institutions concerned, such as river police, fisheries' associations and people interested in the salmon programme and to associate them to this programme.

First sediment management plan for a large, transboundary watershed

Another landmark of ICPR work is the worldwide first sediment management plan drafted for a large, transboundary watershed. It gives a comprehensive overview over sediment pollution in the main stream and its most important tributaries. When analysing dredged material in the impounded Upper Rhine in 2004, excessive sediment pollution was found. Since then, the Rhine bordering countries have investigated into the risk of re-suspending relevant pollutants in the Rhine during flood events, due to wind and human interference (dredging, navigation). All in all, investigations were carried out in 93 areas, of which 22 were classified as "areas at risk", for which proposals for restoration or secure storage were made, for further 18 "areas of concern" surveillance was recommended.

Further information

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Annexes

- Report of the President
- Nine states – one river basin
- Fish-ecological holistic analysis (summary)
- Synthesis of biological investigations
- Sediment management plan for the Rhine (summary)
- Bibliographical evaluation Climate study (summary)
- Rhine – A river and its relations (brochure)
- Rhine&Salmon 2020 (brochure)

Short information

As Rhine bordering countries, Switzerland, France, Germany and the Netherlands as well as Luxemburg and the European Community co-operate within the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) on the basis of a treaty under international law. The President and the different ICPR fora are supported by the international staff of the permanent secretariat in Koblenz (Germany). Furthermore, the secretariat gives support to the countries in the Rhine watershed when implementing the European Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC) and the European Directive on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks (2007/60/EC). To this end, transboundary co-operation was extended to Austria, Liechtenstein and the Belgian region Wallonia. The working languages of the ICPR are German, French and Dutch. For detailed information on the ICPR please browse to the ICPR website: www.iksr.org.