



Petition of Scientists for the Vjosa River

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The Vjosa River in Albania is one of the most iconic rivers in Europe. Together with its tributaries it forms the most intact river system of the continent outside Russia. However, the Vjosa is at risk due to the planned construction of hydropower plants as well as infrastructural development plans near the river's mouth.

As **experts of river landscapes from various scientific disciplines**, we want to stress that recently conducted research in the Vjosa basin strongly suggests an urgent need for a careful re-assessment of risks posed by the planned hydropower projects at Kalivaçi and Poçemi.

In addition to the destruction of unique ecosystems, these projects – according to recent research – will

- *fail to mitigate the downstream flood risk as the dam is not designed to retain large flood flows.*
- *hamper agricultural development by lowering the groundwater table and allowing salt-water intrusion downstream of the reservoirs.*
- *constrain touristic development due to coastal erosion as a result of high sediment retention in the reservoirs.*
- *generate high maintenance costs of the reservoirs and a comparatively short life-span thereof, as high load of fine and coarse particulate sediments will fill the reservoir.*
- *increase hazards of seismic activity in the Vjosa region.*

In line with these risks, we, the undersigned scientists, urge the Albanian government, namely Prime Minister Edi Rama, Minister of Tourism and Environment Blendi Klosi and Minister of Infrastructure and Energy Belinda Balluku to

- 1) *agree on a time period of two years (2020/2021) for a thorough review of the current hydropower development plans in the Vjosa River basin.*
- 2) *jointly explore economically feasible options for a sustainable 'Vjosa River Strategy' within the framework of the evolving River Basin Management Plan.*
- 3) *establish a 'Vjosa River Science Round Table' involving national and international experts in order to allow for informed decision making on key identified issues related to the Vjosa River catchment.*
- 4) *follow Albania's political and legal commitments to meet international conventions as well as EU requirements.*



Peticion i shkencëtarëve për lumin Vjosë

Nëntor 2019

Lumi Vjosë në Shqipëri është një nga lumenjtë më ikonikë në Europë. Së bashku me degët e tij, Vjosa formon sistemin më të paprekur të lumenjve në Europë jashtë Rusisë. Sidoqoftë, Lumi Vjosë është në rrezik për shkak të planifikimit të ndërtimit të hidrocentraleve, si dhe planeve të zhvillimit të infrastrukturës pranë deltës së lumit.

Si ekspertë të peizazheve lumore nga disiplina të ndryshme shkencore, nga hulumtimet i kryera kohët e fundit në pellgun e Vjosës, mbështetim fuqimisht se është urgjentisht i nevojshëm të bëhet rivlerësimi me kujdes i rreziqeve të projekteve të planikuara të hidrocentraleve në Kalivaç dhe Poçem.

Përveç shkatërrimit të ekosistemeve unike, sipas hulumtimeve të fundit këto projekte:

- Nuk zvogëlojnë rrezikun nga përmbytjet në rrjedhën e poshtme, pasi digat e parashikuara nuk mund të mbajnë prurje të mëdha ujërash nga lumi;
- Nikojnë në zhvillimin bujqësor duke ulur nivelin e ujërave nëntokësore, si dhe lejojnë ndërhyrjen e ujit me kripë në rrjedhën poshtë digave;
- Nikojnë në zhvillimin e turizmit nga erozioni bregdetar për shkak të mbajtjes së sedimenteve prej digave;
- Kanë kosto të lartë mirëmbajtjeje të ujëmbledhësve dhe një jetë relativisht të shkurtër të tyre, për shkak të ngarkesës së madhe të grimcave të imëta dhe të trasha të sedimenteve.
- Rritin rreziqet e aktivitetit sismik në rajonin e Vjosës.

Prandaj, ne shkencëtarët nënshkrues, i kërkojmë Qeverisë shqiptare, përkatësisht Kryeministrin Edi Rama, Ministrit të Turizmit dhe Mjedisit Blendi Klosi dhe Ministres së Infrastrukturës dhe Energjisë Belinda Balluku të:

- 1) Bien dakord për një periudhë kohore prej dy vjetësh (2020/2021) për një rishikim të plotë të politikës aktuale të hidrocentraleve në pellgun e lumit Vjosë;
- 2) Hulumtojnë bashkërisht mundësitë ekonome për formulimin e një 'Strategjie të qëndrueshme për lumin Vjosë' brenda kornizës së planifikimit të menaxhimit të pellgjeve lumore;
- 3) Krijojnë një "Tryezë të rrumbullakët shkencore për lumin Vjosë" – ku të janë përfshirë ekspertë vendas dhe ndërkombëtarë në mënyrë që të mundësohet 'informimi në vendimmarje' për çështjet kryesore të identikuara në lidhje me pellgun e lumit Vjosë;
- 4) Ndjekin angazhimet politike/ligjore të miratuara nga Shqipëria për të përbushur konventat ndërkombëtare, si dhe kërkesat e BE-së.

Supported by the undersigned national and international scientists:

1. **Prof. Aleko Miho**, University of Tirana, Albania
2. **Prof. Sajmir Beqiraj**, University of Tirana, Albania
3. **Prof. Ferdinand Bego**, University of Tirana, Albania
4. **Prof. Lulezim Shuka**, University of Tirana, Albania
5. **Prof. Spase Shumka**, Agricultural University of Tirana, Albania
6. **Prof. Çerçis Durmishi**, Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
7. **Prof. Romeo Hanxhari**, University of Tirana, Albania
8. **Dr. Klodian Skrame**, Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
9. **Dr. Taulant Bino**, POLIS University, Tirana, Albania
10. **MSc. Melitjan Nezaj**, University of Tirana, Albania
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33. **MSc Zana Vokopola**, Urban Research Institute, Tirana, Albania
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59. **Ing. Cleanthes Mandi**, Agricultural University of Tirana, Albania
60. **MSc. Endri Haxhiraj**, Institute for Environmental Policy, Albania
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62. **MSc. Anisa Hasani**, University of Tirana, Albania
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64. **MSc. Arditra Draçini**, POLIS University, Albania
65. **BSc. August Koçi**, POLIS University, Albania
66. **Dr. Miliđin Bakalli**, University of "Aleksandër Moisiu", Durrësi, Albania
67. **MSc. Bledi Hoxha**, University of Tirana, Albania
68. **Prof. Neki Frasherri**, Academy of Sciences of Albania, Albania
69. **BSc. Deart Dervishi**, University of Tirana, Albania
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122. **Dr. Dritan Shutina**, Polis University / Co-PLAN – Institute for Habitat Development, Tirana, Albania
123. **Dr. Rudina Toto**, Polis University / Co-PLAN – Institute for Habitat Development, Tirana, Albania
124. **MSc. Aida Ciro (cand. PhD)**, Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development, Albania
125. **MSc. Rodion Gjoka**, Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development, Albania
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143. **Mag. Wolfgang Paill**, Natural History Museum Graz, Austria
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145. **Dr. phil. Gerhard Aubrecht**, Biology Centre Linz (retired), Austria
146. **MSDipl.-Ing. Dr. Kurt Pinter**, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria
147. **MSc. Martin Tschikof**, University of Life Sciences and Natural Resources, Vienna & Wassercluster Lunz, Austria
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178. **Dr.med.vet. Pamela Burger**, University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna, Austria
179. **Assoc. Prof. Johann G. Zaller**, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna, Austria
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183. **DI Dr.nat.techn. Sophie Kratschmer**, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna, Austria
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210. **Univ.-Prof. Ing. Dr. phil. Dr.h.c. Verena Winiwarter**, University of Natural Resources & Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU), Austria
211. **Prof. Dr. Leopold Füreder**, University of Innsbruck, Austria
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228. **MSc. Katharina Geistlinger**, University of Innsbruck, Austria
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231. **MSc. Sarah Zauner**, University of Vienna, Austria
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233. **BSc. Marlene Kollmann**, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria
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236. **Dr. Ingo Korner**, Arge Vegetationsökologie und Landschaftsplanung, Vienna, Austria
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258. **DI Barbara Becker**, Team Restauration Ecology/viadonau, Austria
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268. **BSc. Alexander Auhser**, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria
269. **Mag. Martina Adlboller**, Austria
270. **BSc. Rachel Vith**, University of Natural Resources and Life Science Vienna, Austria
271. **Mag. Lydia Schlosser**, ÖKOTEAM Institute for Animal Ecology and Landscape Planning, Austria
272. **MSc. Pablo Rauch**, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria
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275. **DI Josef Semrad**, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna, Austria
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277. **Mag. Gerold Winkler**, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria
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279. **Dr. phil. Traudlinde Aigner**, Forum Wissenschaft & Umwelt, Austria
280. **Dr. Frank Weihmann**, Austria
281. **Mag. Lydia Schlosser**, ÖKOTEAM Institute for Animal Ecology and Landscape Planning, Austria
282. **DI. BSc. Sarah Höfler**, Technisches Büro für Gewässerökologie Blattfisch, Austria
283. **Mag. Daniela Csar**, Technisches Büro für Gewässerökologie Blattfisch, Austria
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285. **DI Clemens Gumpinger**, Technisches Büro für Gewässerökologie Blattfisch, Austria
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289. **PhD. Andras Abonyi**, WasserCluster Lunz/Centre for Ecological Research, Austria/Hungary
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291. **Apl. Prof. Dr Michael Mutz**, Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus – Senftenberg, Germany
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295. **PD Dr. Matthias Stöck**, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries - IGB, Berlin, Germany
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298. **Prof. Dr. Bernd Gerken**, Institute of Living Rivers & Floordplains, Leipzig, Germany
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300. **Dr. Mauro Carolli**, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries - IGB, Berlin, Germany
301. **MSc. (cand. Ph.D.) Vanessa Marzetz**, University of Potsdam, Germany
302. **Dr. Peter H.W. Biedermann**, Julius Maximilian Universität Würzburg, Germany
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305. **Dr. Jacqueline Rücker**, Brandenburgische Technische Universität, Cottbus-Senftenberg, Germany

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310. **MSc. Ruben van Treeck**, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
311. **BSc. Molly Kressler**, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
312. **Dr. Matthew Talluto**, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
313. **Dr. Kat Austen**, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
314. **MSc Thomas Fuß**, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
315. **MSc. Christin Höhne**, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
316. **MSc. Franziska Kupprat**, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
317. **Dr. Christof Engelhardt**, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
318. **Prof. Dr. Alexander Wacker**, University of Greifswald, Germany
319. **Dipl. rer. nat. Robert Nikolaus**, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
320. **Dr. Lars Duester**, Federal Institute of Hydrology, Germany
321. **Dr. Ilka Lutz**, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
322. **Dr. Vera Breitung**, Federal Institute of Hydrology, Koblenz, Germany
323. **MSc Helena Huđek**, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
324. **MSc. Matthew Ford**, Leibniz Institute for Evolution and Biodiversity Science, Germany
325. **Dr. Julia Arndt**, Federal Institute of Hydrology, Germany
326. **Dr. Jörn Gessner**, Leibniz Institute for Evolution and Biodiversity Science, Germany
327. **cand. Ph.D. Malwina Schafft**, Leibniz Institute for Evolution and Biodiversity Science, Germany
328. **Dr. Armin Lorenz**, Universität Duisburg – Essen, Germany
329. **Dr.-Ing. Marc-Andree Wolf**, maki Consulting GmbH, Germany
330. **cand. PhD Felicie Dhellemmes**, Humboldt University, Germany
331. **Dr. Ute Risse-Buhl**, Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Magdeburg, Germany
332. **Prof. Dr. Klaus Henle**, UFZ - Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, Germany
333. **Dipl.-Ing. Bernd Walser**, Regierungspräsidium Freiburg, Germany
334. **MSc. Lukas Thuile Bistarelli**, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
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338. **Dipl.-Des. Johannes Hansmann**, Aueninstitut für Lebendige Flüsse, Germany
339. **Dr. Alfred Winski**, Büro für Landschaftsplanung und angewandte Ökologie, Germany
340. **BSc. Patrick Volkens**, City University of Applied sciences Bremen, Germany
341. **Dipl.-Ing. Gösta Baganz**, Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
342. **Dr Wolfgang Bott**, University of Tuebingen, Germany
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346. **Dr. rer.pol. Karl Bockelmann**, Germany
347. **Dr. Johannes Radinger**, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries (IGB), Berlin, Germany
348. **Dr. Petr Zajicek**, Senckenberg Research Institute, Germany
349. **Dr. Gerd Hübner**, Federal Institute of Hydrology, Germany
350. **Dr. Lysanne Snijders**, Leibniz Institute for Freshwater Ecology & Inland Fisheries (IGB), Germany
351. **Dr. rer. nat. habil. Klaus-Juergen Appenroth**, University of Jena, Germany
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355. **Dipl.-Ing. Uta Böhme**, Brandenburgische Akademie „Schloss Criewen“, Germany

356. Dr. Jens C. Nejstgaard, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries (IGB), Germany
357. Dr. Tobias Goldhammer, Leibniz Institute for Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
358. Prof. Dr. Hans Dieter Knapp, Succow Foundation, Germany
359. Dr. Stella Berger, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries (IGB), Germany
360. Prof. Dr. Ingolf Kühn, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany
361. Dipl.-Biol. Monika Hess, Büro H2 Ökologische Gutachten, Germany
362. Dipl.-Biol. Ullrich Heckes, Büro H2 Ökologische Gutachten, Germany
363. Dr. Sabine Wollrab, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
364. Dr. Helmut Fischer, Federal Institute of Hydrology, Germany
365. Prof. Dr. Arne Cierjacks, University of Applied Sciences Dresden, Germany
366. Dr. Winfried Bücking, Forest Research Institute of Baden-Württemberg, Germany
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369. Dr. Camille Musseau, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany
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371. Dr. Peter J. Horchler, Bundesanstalt für Gewässerkunde, Germany
372. Dr. Daniel Esser, German Federal Institute of Hydrology, Germany
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381. Prof. Dr. Ursula Gaedke, University of Potsdam, Germany
382. Dr. Walter Koch, University Hospital Freiburg, Germany
383. PD Dr. Martin Pusch, Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries (IGB), Germany
384. Prof. Dr. rer.nat. Heiko Brunkens, City University of Applied Sciences, Bremen, Germany
385. Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Mark Gessner, Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
386. Dr. Sami Domisch, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
387. Jun.-Prof. Dr. Christiane Zarfl, Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen, Germany
388. M.Sc. Matthias Hein, City University of Applied Sciences Bremen, Germany
389. Dr. Jörg Freyhof, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany
390. Prof. Dr. Ingo Kowarik, Technische Universität Berlin, Germany
391. Prof. Hubert Weiger, University of Kassel, Germany
392. Prof. Kai Frobel, University of Bayreuth, Germany
393. Dipl. Richard Mergner, Germany
394. Dr. Philipp Unterweger, Dr. Unterweger Biodiversitätsplanung, Wain, Germany
395. MSc. Sven Matern, Leibniz Institute for Evolution and Biodiversity Science, Germany
396. Dr. David Almeida, CEU University, Madrid, Spain
397. Dr. María Almagro, Spanish Research Council (CEBAS-CSIC), Spain
398. Dr. Miguel Cañedo-Argüelles, University of Barcelona, Spain
399. Dr. Joris de Vente, Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), Spain
400. Dr. José Ignacio Querejeta, National Research Council, Murcia, Spain
401. Prof. José Barquín Ortiz, Universidad de Cantabria, Spain
402. PhD Giulia Gionchetta, University of Girona, Spain
403. PhD Marianne Köck Schulmeyer, IDAEA-CSIC, Spain
404. MSc. Raquel Luján Soto, Centre of Edaphology and Applied Biology of the Segura, Spain
405. Prof. Andy J. Green, CSIC, Spain
406. Guillermo García Pérez, MN Consultants on Conservation Sciences, Spain
407. PhD. Francisco J. Peñas, University of Cantabria, Spain
408. PhD. Núria Catalán, Catalan Institute for Water Research (ICRA), Spain

409. **MSc. Irene Paredes Losada**, Estación Biológica de Doñana, Spain
410. **Dr. Andrés Mellado-Díaz**, Tragsatec, Spain
411. **Prof. Agustín Sanchez-Arcilla**, Catalonia University of Technology Barcelona, Spain
412. **PhD. Miguel Clavero**, Doñana Biological Station, Spain
413. **Dr. Ramón J. De Miguel Rubio**, University of Cordoba, Spain
414. **Dr. Rafael Muñoz Mas**, University of Girona, Spain
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423. **cand. PhD. Enrique González-Bernardo**, Pyrenean Institute of Ecology, Spain
424. **Dr. Ana Ruiz-Navarro**, Universidad de Murcia, Spain
425. **Cand. PhD. Elena Quintero Borrero**, Estación Biológica de Doñana, Spain
426. **Prof. Francesc Gallart**, IDAEA - CSIC. Barcelona, Spain
427. **Prof. José Barquín Ortiz**, Universidad de Cantabria, Spain
428. **Prof. Eugènia Martí Roca**, Center for Advanced Studies of Blanes (CEAB-CSIC), Spain
429. **Cand. PhD. Ana Morales González**, Doñana Biological Station, Spain
430. **Prof. Sergi Sabater**, Institute of Aquatic Ecology & Catalan Institute for Water Research, Spain
431. **MSc. Iván Mota Esteso**, University of Alcalá, Spain
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436. **Prof. Narcís Prat**, Universitat de Barcelona, Spain
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438. **PhD. Rafael Marcé**, Catalan Institute for Water Research (ICRA), Spain
439. **Dr. Pablo Rodríguez-Lozano**, University of the Balearic Islands, Spain
440. **Dr. Guillermina Garzon**, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain
441. **Cand. PhD. Isabel Salado**, Doñana Biological Station, Spain
442. **Dr. Josu Elso**, CIREF (Iberian Centre for River Restoration), Spain
443. **Prof. Dr. Emili García-Berthou**, University of Girona, Spain
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449. **Assoc. Prof. Núria Bonada**, University of Barcelona, Catalonia/Spain
450. **Dr. José A. Donázar**, Estación Biológica de Doñana (CSIC), Sevilla, Spain
451. **Asoc. Prof. Roberto García Esteban**, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain
452. **Dr. Dídac Jordà**, Catalan Institute for Water Research & University of Girona, Spain
453. **Prof. Bernhard Wehrli**, ETH Zurich, Switzerland
454. **Prof. Carsten Schubert**, Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology - EAWAG, Switzerland
455. **Prof. Ole Seehausen**, University of Bern & Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology - EAWAG, Switzerland
456. **Prof. Patricia Burkhardt-Holm**, University of Basel, Switzerland
457. **Dr. Beat Müller**, Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology - EAWAG, Switzerland
458. **MSc Karen Bussmann**, University of Basel, Switzerland
459. **PD Dr. Nele Schuwirth**, Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology - EAWAG, Switzerland
460. **Dr. Irene Adrian-Kalchhauser**, University of Basel, Switzerland

461. **Dr. Christine Weber**, Eawag - Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology, Switzerland
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483. **MSc. Gabriele Consoli**, eawag, Switzerland
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487. **PD Dr. Mario F.Broggi**, Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research WSL, Switzerland
488. **Prof. Peter Molnar**, ETH Zurich, Switzerland
489. **MSc. Benedikt Ehrenfels**, Eawag & ETH Zürich, Switzerland
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499. **PhD Georges Carrel**, National Research Institute of Science and Technology for Environment and Agriculture IRSTEA, France
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506. **Dr. Claire Lauvernet**, Irstea - Lyon, France
507. **cand. PhD Lise Devreux**, University of Nice Côte d'Azur, France
508. **MSc. Hervé Parmentier**, Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon, France
509. **PhD Mathieu Cassel**, Lyon University in the National Center for Scientific Research, France
510. **Dr. Fanny Arnaud**, University of Lyon, CNRS, France

511. **PhD. Delphine Nicolas**, Fondation Tour du Valat, France
 512. **MSc. Roberta Fausti**, Tour du Valat Research Institute, France
 513. **PhD. Christian Perennou**, Tour du Valat Research Institute, France
 514. **Dr Brigitte Poulin**, Tour du Valat Research Institute, France
 515. **Dr. Jocelyn Champagnon**, Tour du Valat Research Institute, France
 516. **MSc. Jean Jalbert**, Tour du Valat Research Institute, France
 517. **BSc. Emilie Luna-Laurent**, Tour du Valat Research Institute, France
 518. **Dr. A. J. Crivelli**, Tour du Valat Research Institute (retired), France
 519. **Dr. Chloé Bonnneau**, Irstea, France
 520. **Dr. Françoise Ponce**, Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage, France
 521. **Ing. Gaït Archambaud-Suard**, National Research Institute of Science and Technology for Environment and Agriculture IRSTEA, France
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 538. **Vittoria Scorpio Ph.D.**, Free University of Bolzano-Bozen, Italy
 539. **Dr. Lorenzo Picco**, University of Padova, Italy
 540. **MSE. Anna Maria De Girolamo**, Water research Institute-National Research Council, Bari, Italy
 541. **MSc. Giacomo Laghetto**, University of Trento, Italy
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 553. **PhD. Alessandro Errico**, University of Florence, Italy
 554. **MSc. (cand. PhD) Romina D'Ascanio**, Roma Tre University, Italy
 555. **Dr. Giancarlo Gusmaroli**, Italian Centre for River Restoration, Italy
 556. **Dr.phil. Genc Lafe**, University of Salento, Italy
 557. **cand. PhD. David Farò**, University of Trento, Italy
 558. **Ing. Francesca Benci**, University of Trento, Italy
 559. **PhD. Riccardo Fornaroli**, Università degli studi di Milano-Bicocca, Italy
 560. **MSc. Luca Bonacina**, University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy
 561. **Prof. Dr. Steven Declerck**, Netherlands Institute of Ecology (NIOO-KNAW), The Netherlands & University of Leuven, Belgium

562. Prof. dr. ir. Piet F.M. Verdonschot, Wageningen environmental Research, The Netherlands
563. Dr. P.J.T.M. van Puijenbroek, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands
564. MSc Sara Campana, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
565. Dr. Michiel H.S. Kraak, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
566. MSc. Milo de Baat, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
567. MSc. Simon H. Visser, National Agency for Cultural Heritage (retired), The Netherlands
568. Prof. Dr. Wim Admiraal, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
569. MSc. Lisette Mekkes, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
570. Dr. Gertjan Geerling, Deltares and Radboud University, The Netherlands
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572. Dr. Tom Buijse, The Netherlands
573. MSc. Carlijn Bak, The Netherlands
574. Ir. Gerda Lenselink, The Netherlands
575. Dr. Erik Mosselman, TU Delft, The Netherlands
576. Dr. Klaas-Douwe B. Dijkstra, Naturalis Biodiversity Center & IUCN Freshwater Conservation Committee, The Netherlands
577. MSc. Rens de Boer, Wageningen University, the Netherlands
578. MSc Hanna Spanier, Wageningen University, the Netherlands
579. MSc. William Oliemans, River basin management / IWRM specialist, The Netherlands
580. Dr. Jan H. Janse, PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency & Netherlands Institute of Ecology, The Netherlands
581. Cand. PhD. Paula Caroline dos Reis Oliveira, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
582. Prof. McClain, IHE Delft Institute for Water Education, The Netherlands
583. Prof. Robert J. Naiman, University of Washington in Seattle, USA
584. PhD. Steven Schroder, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (retired), USA
585. Dr. David Heller, Forest Service. Pacific NW Region (Retired), USA
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587. Dr. Alec G. Maule, United States Geological Survey & Columbia River Research Laboratory (retired), USA
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590. Dr. Julian D. Olden, University of Washington, USA
591. PhD. Gregory T. Ruggerone, Natural Resources Consultants Inc., USA
592. Prof. em. Alan M. Springer, University of Alaska Fairbanks, USA
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594. Prof. em. Jack A. Stanford, University of Montana, USA
595. BSc. Priscilla Titus, University of New York, USA
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602. Dr. Ian Harrison, IUCN Species Survival Commission, USA
603. PhD student, Ivana Lozanovska, University of Lisbon, Portugal
604. Prof. Maria Ilhéu, University of Évora, Portugal
605. Dr. Zeynep Ersoy, Universidade de Évora, Portugal
606. PhD. Sandra Carla Fernandes Craveiro, University of Aveiro, Portugal
607. MSc. Andreia Filipa Henriques Mortágua, University of Aveiro, Portugal
608. Udo Schwarzer, IUCN/SSC fresh water plants especialista group, Portugal
609. Dr. Ana Filipa Filipe, CIBIO-InBIO, Portugal
610. PhD. Alban Kuriqi, University of Lisbon, Portugal
611. PhD. Verónica Ferreira, University of Coimbra/MARE, Portugal
612. Dr. Duarte V. Gonçalves, University of Porto, Portugal

- 613.** **MSc. Patrícia Ferreira**, University of Porto, Portugal
614. **Dr. Pieter van der Linden**, University of Porto, Portugal
615. **PhD. Isabel Cunha**, University of Porto, Portugal
616. **PhD. Andrés Rodríguez-Seijo**, University of Porto, Portugal
617. **Dr. Carla Sousa Santos**, MARE and ISPA University, Portugal
618. **Dr. Vania Freitas**, CIIMAR, Portugal
619. **MSc. Ana Garcia**, CIIMAR, Portugal
620. **Prof. Simone da Graça Pinto Varandas**, University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Portugal
621. **Prof. Ronaldo Sousa**, University of Minho, Portugal
622. **MSc. Francisco Ricardo Lacerda Branco**, CIIMAR - Centro Interdisciplinar de Investigação Marinha e Ambiental, Portugal
623. **Dr. Nikolaos Skoulikidis**, Hellenic Centre for Marine Research – HCMR, Greece
624. **Prof. Maria Lazaridou**, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece
625. **Dr. Ioannis Karaouzas**, Hellenic Centre for Marine Research, Greece
626. **Dr. Kalaroni Sofia**, Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR), Greece
627. **Dr. Sotiris Kioroglou**, Hellenic Center for Marine Research, HCMR, Greece
628. **B.Sc. Sofia Giakoumi**, Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR), Greece
629. **Dr. Christina Papadaki**, Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR), Greece
630. **cand. PhD Argiro Adamopoulou**, Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR), Greece
631. **MSc. Dora Kouvarda**, Hellenic Centre for Marine Research, Greece
632. **M.Sc. Eleana Kazila**, Natural History Museum of Crete, Greece
633. **Assoc. Prof. Vassiliki Kati**, University of Ioannina, Greece
634. **PhD. George N. Zaimis**, International Hellenic University, Greece
635. **PhD. Nikolas Katsoulakos**, National Technical University of Athens, Greece
636. **MSc. Ioannis Theodoropoulos**, Greece
637. **MSc. (cand. PhD) Maria Petridou**, University of Ioannina, Greece
638. **Prof. Ifigenia Kagalou**, Democritus University of Thrace, Greece
639. **Cand. PhD. Loukas-Moysis Misthos**, National Technical University of Athens, Greece
640. **M.Eng. Tatiana Vrazitouli**, Greece
641. **Assoc. Prof. Dimitra Bobori**, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece
642. **Asst. Prof. Natasa Gregoric Bon**, Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia
643. **Prof. Dr. Radmila Milačič**, Jožef Stefan Institute, Slovenia
644. **Prof. ass. Cene Fišer**, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
645. **Prof. Emeritus Maca Jogan**, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
646. **MSc. Mateja Grašič**, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
647. **asist. Dr. Žiga Fišer**, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
648. **Dr. Gregor Bozic**, Slovenian Forestry Institute, Slovenia
649. **Assist. Prof. Dr. Simona Prevorčnik**, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
650. **Dr. Simona Sušnik Bajec**, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
651. **Dr. Barbara Rovsek**, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
652. **Asst. Prof. Dr. Miha Krofel**, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
653. **Dr. Aleš Snoj**, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
654. **Prof. Dr. Borut Telban**, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia
655. **MSc. Liza Stančič**, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia
656. **Dr. Spela Goricki**, Scriptorium biologorum LLC, Slovenia
657. **Dr. Metka Povž**, Umbra Institute, Slovenia
658. **Dr. Ana Jelnikar**, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia
659. **Dr. David Stanković**, National Institute of Biology, Slovenia
660. **cand. PhD. Raquel Arias Font**, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom
661. **Prof. Luca Börger**, Swansea University, United Kingdom
662. **Prof. Carlos Garcia de Leaniz**, Swansea University, United Kingdom
663. **Prof. Jesse O'Hanley**, University of Kent, United Kingdom

664. **MSc. Richard Lansdown**, IUCN SSC Freshwater Plant Specialist Group, United Kingdom
 665. **BSc. Andrea Swatman**, Chester Zoo, United Kingdom
 666. **MSc. Cordula Wittekind**, University of Leeds, United Kingdom
 667. **Ben Baker**, Chester Zoo (North of England zoological society), United Kingdom
 668. **Prof. Mike Elliott**, University of Hull, United Kingdom
 669. **MSc. Marie Arnaud**, University of Leeds, United Kingdom
 670. **Prof. Philip J Boon**, The Freshwater Biological Association, Ambleside, United Kingdom
 671. **Dr. Rachel Stubbington**, Nottingham Trent University, United Kingdom
 672. **Dr. Paolo Bombelli**, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom
 673. **Prof. Ian G. Cowx**, University of Hull, United Kingdom
 674. **Dr. Simon Stuart**, Synchronicity Earth, United Kingdom
 675. **Dr. Arjan Gjonça**, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom
 676. **Dr Edlira Gjonca**, London School of Economics, United Kingdom
 677. **Prof. Angela M. Gurnell**, Queen Mary University of London, United Kingdom
 678. **Prof. Dr. Tahir Arbnesh**, University of Pristina, Republic of Kosovo
 679. **Ass. Prof. Armend Sh. Shabani**, University of Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo
 680. **Prof. Dr. Faton Berisha**, University of Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo
 681. **Prof. Zeqir Veselaj**, University of Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo
 682. **Assoc. Prof. Ferdiye Zhushi Etemi**, University of Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo
 683. **Prof. Ass. Dr. Kimete Lluga-Rizani**, University of Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo
 684. **Dr.sc. Albana R. Mehmeti**, University of Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo
 685. **Dr.sc. Arsim Maloku**, University of Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo
 686. **MSc. Naim Berisha**, University of Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo
 687. **Ass Msc. Gentiana Hasani Bekteshi**, University of Pristina, Republic of Kosovo
 688. **Prof. asoc. Avni Hajdari**, University of Pristina, Republic of Kosovo
 689. **Prof. Dr. Behgjet Mustafa**, University of Pristina, Republic of Kosovo
 690. **Msc. (cand. PhD.) Bledar Pulaj**, University of Pristina, Republic of Kosovo
 691. **Cand. PhD. Bardh Xerxa**, University of Pristina, Republic of Kosovo
 692. **MSc. Zenel Krasniqi**, University of Pristina, Republic of Kosovo
 693. **Prof. Agim Gashi**, Universiteti i Prishtines "Hasan Prishtina", Republic of Kosovo
 694. **PhD. Violeta Berlajolli**, University of Haxhi Zeka, Peje, Republic of Kosovo
 695. **Mag.biol.oecol. Jasmin Sadiković**, Croatia
 696. **MSc. Vesna Gulin**, University of Zagreb, Croatia
 697. **MSc. Anamarija Kolda**, Ruder Boskovic Institute, Croatia
 698. **Asst. Prof. Marija Ivković**, University of Zagreb, Croatia
 699. **Prof. Marina Piria**, University of Zagreb, Croatia
 700. **Mag.Ing.agr Tena Radočaj**, University of Zagreb, Croatia
 701. **Mag. Ing. agr. Mag. oecol. et prot. nat. Ivan Šepelić**, University of Zagreb, Croatia
 702. **Assoc. Prof. Jasna Lajtner**, University of Zagreb, Croatia
 703. **Prof. Dr. Patrick Meire**, University of Antwerp, Belgium
 704. **Hon Prof. Dr. Eckhart Kuijken**, Ghent University, Belgium
 705. **Prof. Lieven Bervoets**, University of Antwerp, Belgium
 706. **MSc. David Buysse**, Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO), Belgium
 707. **MSc. Geert De Knijf**, Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO), Belgium
 708. **BSc. Jo Packet**, Research Institute for Nature and Forest Brussels, Belgium
 709. **Dr. Luc Denys**, Research Institute for Nature and Forest, Belgium
 710. **Prof. Anna Wysocka**, University of Gdansk, Poland
 711. **Prof. Michał Grabowski**, University of Łódź, Poland
 712. **Dr. Kinga Krauze**, European Regional Centre for Ecohydrology PAS, Poland
 713. **Prof. Dr. Piotr Debowski**, Inland Fisheries Institute, Poland
 714. **BSc (cand. MSc) Nina Peleksić**, University of Agriculture Krakow, Poland
 715. **PhD. Maria Urbańska**, Poznań University of Life Sciences, Poland
 716. **Dr.hab. Jan Kotusz**, Museum of Natural History & University of Wrocław, Poland

717. **Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Beshkov**, National Museum of Natural History, Bulgaria
718. **PhD, Assoc. Prof. Dragan Petrov Chobanov**, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria
719. **Dr. Boyan Zlatkov**, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria
720. **PhD. Desislava Stoianova**, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria
721. **Prof. Snejana Grozeva**, Institute of biodiversity and ecosystem research, Bulgaria
722. **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Apostolos Apostolou**, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria
723. **Prof. Kim Aarestrup**, Technical University of Denmark, Denmark
724. **Cand. PhD. Kim Birnie-Gauvin**, Technical University of Denmark, Denmark
725. **Cand. PhD. Hugo de Moura Flávio**, Technical University of Denmark, Denmark
726. **Dr. Martin Lykke Kristensen**, Technical University of Denmark, Denmark
727. **PhD. Niels Jepsen**, Technical University of Denmark, Denmark
728. **Dr Zsófia Horváth**, Balaton Limnological Institute, Centre for Ecological Research, Hungary
729. **Prof. Dr. Miklós Bulla**, University of Győr, Hungary
730. **PhD. Balázs Tóth**, Duna-Ipoly National Park Directorate, Hungary
731. **Dr. Péter Sály**, Centre for Ecological Research, Hungary
732. **PhD. Sándor Tatár**, Szent István University, Hungary
733. **Prof. Stuart E. Bunn**, Australian Rivers Institute & Griffith University, Australia
734. **Dr Neil E Pettit**, The University of Western Australia, Australia
735. **Dr Michelle T. Casanova**, Federation University Australia, Australia
736. **Dr. Vanessa Reis**, Griffith University, Australia
737. **Prof.Dr. Hesat Aliu**, Tetovo University, North Macedonia
738. **Asst Prof Dr. Gazmend Iseni**, University of Tetovo, North Macedonia
739. **Prof. Dr. Zlatko Levkov**, University Ss Cyril and Methodius, North Macedonia
740. **Prof. PhD. Slavcho Hristovski**, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, North Macedonia
741. **Dr. Peter L. Pap**, Babes Bolyai University, Romania
742. **Cand. PhD. Nagy András Attila**, Babes-Bolyai University, Romania
743. **Dr. Adrian Stanica**, Romanian National Institute of Marine Geology and Geoecology, Romania
744. **Dr. Andrei Crișan**, Romanian Lepidopterological Society, Romania
745. **Prof.Dr. Avdul Adrović**, University of Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina
746. **PhD. Dragan Skobic**, University of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina
747. **Asoc. Prof. Svjetlana Stanić-Koštroman**, University of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina
748. **Dr. Petr Paril**, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
749. **RNDr. PhD. Pavel Šroka**, Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic
750. **Mgr. Erika Lorencová**, Masaryk University, Czech Republic
751. **Prof. Ratko Ristić**, University of Belgrade, Serbia
752. **Prof. Predrag Simonović**, University of Belgrade, Serbia
753. **MSc. Aleksandar Bajić**, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
754. **Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Junk**, Federal University of Mato Grosso, Brazil
755. **MSc. Junior Chuctaya**, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil
756. **Dr. Joan Pere Casas-Ruiz**, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Canada
757. **Dr. John S. Richardson**, University of British Columbia, Canada
758. **cand. PhD Lorenzo Pin**, Norwegian institute for water research (NIVA, Oslo), Norway
759. **MSc. Elisabeth Stöger**, NORCE LFI, Norway
760. **Prof. Priscilla G Minotti**, Universidad Nacional de San Martin, Buenos Aires, Argentina
761. **Prof. Samvel Pipoyan**, Armenian State Pedagogical University, Armenia
762. **Prof. Dhan Bdr Gurung**, Royal University of Bhutan, Bhutan
763. **Dr. Michael Murray-Hudson**, University of Botswana, Botswana
764. **MSc. Iakovos Tziortzis**, Water Development Department, Cyprus
765. **PhD. Gabriela Echevarría Díaz**, Amazon State University, Ecuador
766. **Dr. Archil Guchmanidze**, Association "Flora & Fauna", Georgia
767. **Prof. Avital Gasith**, Tel-Aviv University, Israel
768. **Prof. Dr. H K Goswami**, Barkatullah University (retired), India
769. **Prof. Futoshi Nakamura**, Hokkaido University, Japan

- 770. MSc. Baas Brimer**, Lux-Development, Luxembourg
- 771. Prof. Dr. Omar Domínguez Domínguez**, Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, México
- 772. Dr. Dragana Milosevic Malidzan**, University of Montenegro, Montenegro
- 773. PhD. DSc. Alik Ismail-Zadeh**, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Germany & Russian Academy of Sciences IIEPT, Moscow, Russia
- 774. Prof. Peter S Maitland**, University of Glasgow, Scotland
- 775. PhD. Bo Delling**, Swedish Museum of Natural History, Sweden
- 776. Prof. N. Berlinsky**, Odessa State Environmental University, Ukraine