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@creativaty



SEP 29 - OCT 02  
**2024**

# BALKAN RIVER SUMMIT

**PROGRAMME**

Uniting Voices for the Blue Heart of Europe





# WELCOME DOBRODOŠLI

For over a decade, the "Save the Blue Heart of Europe" campaign has been a relentless force in protecting free-flowing rivers across the Balkans.

This grassroots movement, with activists from Slovenia to Greece, has made remarkable progress in stopping dam projects and preserving these vital ecosystems. However, challenges remain, and new opportunities are arising.

The 2024 Balkan River Summit is a chance for river defenders to come together, celebrate wins, share experiences, and inspire each other as we map out the next steps for safeguarding these precious rivers.

"In our fight to save the rivers of the Balkans we have experienced bright moments of victory, joy and passion, but also dark times of frustration and the feeling of helplessness. However, for me, the positive outweighs it by far. Many of the rivers would no longer exist without us. Let's put our heads together, our passion, our joy and courage to save many more rivers, more nature.

This is exactly the idea behind the Balkan River Summit."

**ULRICH EICHELMANN**  
Executive Director, Riverwatch



**JELENA POPOVIC**

Co-Director,  
Montenegrin Ecologists Society

"In an era where wilderness is suffocating, organising events like the Balkan River Summit is vital.

Here, we will inspire each other to rediscover our authentic wilderness within, comparing it to the wild rivers that inspire us and for which we fight.

We will then be invited to create a confluence of actions and voices, forming a strong protective net to ensure that our rivers and wilderness remain free for centuries to come."

"Over the past years, we have organised European River Summits in Lisbon and Brussels alongside partners from across the Mediterranean and beyond. These summits provided valuable opportunities to exchange ideas and inspire action for river protection across Europe.

However, we now feel it's time to focus specifically on the Balkans, addressing the unique challenges in this region. A key issue is the lack of political will to prioritise ecological protection over economic interests. After over a decade of continuous efforts, fatigue is setting in within our partnership.

We hope the Balkan River Summit will reignite our collective energy and drive to protect these vital rivers."



**ANNETTE SPANGENBERG**

Head of Conservation  
Freshwater Unit  
EuroNatur



# SUNDAY

## World Rivers Day Special Event: Protect the Rivers of Montenegro

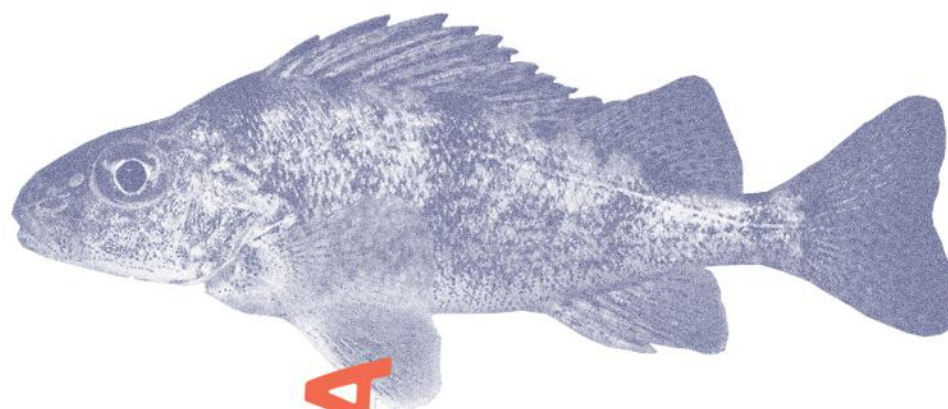
### Morača Floatilla & Big Jump

**Opening Speech/Departure of Floatilla:** Rogami Beach

**Arrival/Speeches:** Skaline, Sastavci Park  
(below Blažo Jovanović Bridge) Podgorica

**Moderation:** Jovana Đukanović & Danijel Garić

14.00	<b>Opening Speech</b> Miljko Bulajić, Kayaking Guide/Save Komarnica
14.15	<b>Guided floatilla on Morača</b> (arrival at Sastavci Park around 15.00)
15.30	<b>Appeals to protect and safeguard the rivers of Montenegro</b>  Jelena Marojević Galić, Parks Dinarides Dragan Hajduković, Physicist/Environmental Activist Jasenka Lalović, Writer Prince Nikola of Montenegro, Architect Jelena Popović & Andrijana Mićanović, Montenegrin Ecologists Society/Save Komarnica
16.30	<b>Big Jump Morača</b> (bring your swimsuit!)



NEDELJA

# SEPTEMBER 29th

## Balkan River Summit Opening

**Location:** Skaline, Sastavci Park  
(below Blažo Jovanović Bridge), Podgorica

**Moderation:** Jovana Đukanović & Daniel Garić

17.30	<b>Opening Remarks</b> Moderators
17.40	<b>Welcome and opening speeches</b>  Cornelia Wieser, RiverWatch/Save the Blue Heart Amelie Huber, EuroNatur/Save the Blue Heart Jelena Popović & Andrijana Mićanović, Montenegrin Ecologists Society/Save Komarnica Branka Knežević, Secretariat for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development, Capital City Podgorica
18.15	<b>Keynote I: Montenegrin rivers today and tomorrow</b> Vuk Iković, Conservation Biologist
18.30	<b>Mini Film Fest</b>
18.50	<b>Keynote II: (Re-)Uniting voices for Balkan rivers within and across borders</b> Mihela Hladin Wolfe
19.05	<b>Closing announcements</b>
19.15	<b>Drinks, finger food &amp; music</b>  Featuring Milica Kankaraš Berber on harp and DJ Double Needle Project





# MONDAY

**Moderation:**  
Jovana Đukanović  
& Daniel Garić

## Summit Day 1: Morning

**Location:** Hotel Podgorica, br.1 Ulica Svetlane Kane Radević

**Registration** ( 8.15 - 8.50 )

9.00 **Opening remarks and icebreaker**

9.30 **Keynote III: 10+ Years Defending the Blue Heart of Europe**

Paule Gros, BiodivEarth

9.50 **Panel Discussion I: 10+ Years Defending the Blue Heart of Europe: New Challenges, Activist Responses & Ideas for River Protection in the Balkans** ( Moderation: Roxanne Diaz, Blue Heart )

Annette Spangenberg, EuroNatur/Save the Blue Heart  
Ulli Eichelmann, RiverWatch/Save the Blue Heart  
Irma Dujmovic Popoic, The Nature Conservancy  
Andrej Sovinc, NaravaNarave

10.50 **Coffee Break** 

11.20 **Networking Impulse**

11.50 **Meet the Activists I: Participants pitches**

Iva Kljajević, Independent Researcher

"Campaigning against small hydropower in Montenegro: the Mojanska case"

Jelena Jovčić-Petrović, Ne damo vode Mionice

"Struganik" dam on Ribnica – a potential threat for geoheritage, groundwater sources & biodiversity

Sanja Sevo & Dijana Kleinberg,  
Udruga Una / Initiative Save Una

"Fighting hydropower on Una River, Croatia"

Fanourios-Nikolaos Sakellarakis, MedINA

"Recent progress in the conservation of the Aios/Vjosa in Greece"

Kelsey Aho, Geoartist: Art as water stewardship

13.00 **Lunch** 

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PODGORICA



# SEPTEMBER 30th

## Summit Day 1: Afternoon

**Location:** Hotel Podgorica

14.15 **Capacity Building & Skill Sharing Workshops\* I** ( See page 9 + 10 )

15.15 **Coffee Break** 

15.45 **Panel Discussion II: View from the Outside – Mobilising media for river protection in the Balkans**

( Moderation: Tara Sukic, EuroNatur / Blue Heart )

Bruno D'Amicis, Conservation Photographer and Storyteller

Bonnie Barclay, Rising Action Strategies

Milka Tadic Mijovic,

Center for Investigative Journalism of Montenegro

Besar Likmeta, BIRN Albania

16.45 **Energiser**

17.00 -  
18.00

**Meet the Activists II: Participants pitches**

Nicoleta Nour, Slovenian Native Fish Society:

Community-driven Flood Protection -  
Alternative ways to fight Hydro

Vuk Vujisić, Let's Green Montenegro:

From Devastation to Protection

Ivana Čogurić, Ekopatriotism:

Is that a river?

Nadija Čehajić, River Collective:

Students for free-flowing rivers

Vanja Lazić, Center Bolkey BiH:

Rivers Full of Stories

19.00

**Buffet dinner**

Location: Culture Club Tarantino,

6 Bokeška ulica, Podgorica



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# TUESDAY

## Summit Day 2: Morning

Location: Hotel Podgorica,  
br.1 Ulica Svetlane Kane Radević

9.00 Opening remarks and ice breaker

**Keynote IV: Do we need more dams?  
Climate change, biodiversity loss and the  
renewables transition**

Steven Weiss, University of Graz

**Panel Discussion III: Do we need more dams?**

( Moderation: Amelie Huber, EuroNatur / Blue Heart )

Milan Niković, Montenegrin Institute for Renewable Energy  
& New Technologies

Bonnie Barclay, Rising Action Strategies

Chris Vrettos, REScoop.eu (online)

Steven Weiss, University of Graz

Coffee Break

**Parallel Session I: European Green Deal and the  
Western Balkans – River protection policies & EU accession**

( Moderation: Annette Spangenberg, EuroNatur / Blue Heart )

Malgorzata Smolak, Environmental and Energy Lawyer / Blue Heart

Žaklina Živković, Polekol / Pravo na Vodu

Viktor Berishaj, EuroNatur

Speaker TBC

**Parallel Session II: Science & Activism**

( Moderation: Cornelia Wieser, RiverWatch / Blue Heart )

Gabriel Singer, University of Innsbruck / Scientists for Balkan Rivers

Rastko Ajtic, University of Kragujevac

Roel Wouters, European Biodiversity Survey / Charles University Prague

Hasan Hadžiablahović, Municipality of Tuzi

**Breakout groups: Exchange, brainstorm and strategising  
on different river protection topics**

Lunch break



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UTORAK

14.30

14.30

15.30

16.00

16.00

17.00 - 17.45

20.00

# OCTOBER 1st

## Summit Day 2: Afternoon

Location: Hotel Podgorica

Capacity Building & Skill Sharing Workshops\* II ( See page 9 + 10 )

**Parallel Session III: River Protection in Montenegro** (In Montenegrin)  
( Moderation: Jovana Đukanovic )

Vuk Iković, Conservation Biologist

Andrijana Mićanović, Montenegrin Ecologists Society / Save Komarnica

Tamara Brajović, Directorate of Nature Protection,

Ministry of Ecology, Montenegro

Dejan Mijović, Independent Consultant

Coffee Break

**Parallel Session IV: Pan-regional river protection  
efforts in the Balkans** ( Moderation: Mihela Hladin Wolfe )

Lejla Kusturica, Let's Defend the Rivers of the Western Balkans / ACT

Tamara Preininger, United for Rivers / The Nature Conservancy

Ulrich Eichelmann, Riverwatch / Blue Heart

**Parallel Session V: Living with wild rivers – River protection  
and rural development** ( Moderation: Tara Sukić, EuroNatur / Blue Heart )

Kirsi Hyvaerinen, HYVA Coaching & Consulting / Save Komarnica

Good places to live are good places to visit:

Nature - and community-based tourism as alternatives to HPPs

Aleš Skalić, Development Centre Murska Sobrota:

The Mura River as a Development Potential

Elena Kokthi, Agriculture University of Tirana:

The Role of Blue Spaces in Well-being:

Human Interaction with the Vjosa River

Danijel Lončar, United for Rivers Initiative / The Nature Conservancy:

Rivers as Cultural Landscapes – Leveraging Cultural Heritage

Protection Acts for Nature Conservation

**Final Plenary Discussion & Summit Closing**

**Party | Featuring VIS Tetra** (fingerfood served)

Location: Centar Kulturnih Zbivanja Ribnica, Obala Ribnice, Podgorica

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# Capacity Building & Skill Sharing Workshops

WORKSHOPS	LEADERS	DESCRIPTION
<b>WS1: Storytelling, Awareness Raising, Media Work</b> - How to make your story heard	<b>Bruno D'Amicis</b> , Conservation Photographer and Storyteller <b>Danijel Lončar</b> , United for Rivers Initiative / The Nature Conservancy	This interactive session focuses on visual narratives and storytelling through various media. We'll kick off with brief introductions and an overview of key concepts. Participants will then work in small groups to create a storyboard for a short story, complete with a title and pitch. Each group will present their story, followed by a Q&A session.
<b>WS2: Direct Action</b> - Creative and non-violent tools and tactics for activism	<b>Ivana Čogurić</b> , Ecopatriotism	This workshop will approach direct action through the lens of communication, focusing on how to develop soft communication skills to ensure that direct actions have an impact. Whatever we do on the ground – collect litter, organise a protest or stage a performance – behind it all needs to be awareness of the law and a calm approach with soft communication skills.
<b>WS3: Legal Activism</b> - How to use the law to protect a river	<b>Malgorzata Smolak</b> , Environmental and Energy Lawyer / Blue Heart <b>Olsi Nika</b> , EcoAlbania	This workshop will explore how civil society can leverage legal tools to protect rivers, offering activists valuable insights and practical guidance. Led by an international environmental lawyer and an NGO expert experienced in legal activism, the session will cover key legal strategies and their challenges. Participants are encouraged to share their cases or questions, fostering a collaborative exchange of ideas and advice.
<b>WS4: Activism, Human Rights &amp; Access to Justice</b> - Dealing with repression and discrimination	<b>Azra Berbić</b> , Atelier for Community Transformation (ACT) <b>Žaklina Živković</b> , Polekol / Pravo na Vodu	This workshop will reflect on the ongoing democratic and human rights challenges of being activists in the Balkans. We will first provide a global and regional overview of the risks environmental activists face, including threats to their security, SLAPPs, burnout, and smear campaigns etc. This will be followed by an open discussion, reflecting on experiences, problems and questions, as well as sharing best practices to strengthen activists' resilience and mental health.
<b>WS5: Mobilizing Science for River Protection</b> - A workshop for scientists and non-scientific practitioners	<b>Fanourios-Nikolaos Sakellarakis</b> , Medina <b>Gabriel Singer</b> , University of Innsbruck / Scientists for Balkan Rivers <b>Ulli Eichelmann</b> , RiverWatch / Blue Heart	This workshop explores how to engage scientists to support river conservation based on the experience from the Scientists 4 Rivers Network. Participants can learn more about coordinating such networks, events like science weeks, and strategies for using scientific voices to advocate for environmental action.

# Capacity Building & Skill Sharing Workshops

<b>WS6: Citizen Science for River Protection</b> - How to involve the public in data collection	<b>Fanourios-Nikolaos Sakellarakis</b> , Medina <b>Gabriel Singer</b> , University of Innsbruck / Scientists for Balkan Rivers	This workshop introduces citizen science as a tool for river protection, highlighting its differences from traditional science. Participants will be able to creatively think up own events, learning how to collect and use data, and how to engage the public in environmental education and activism.
<b>WS7: Education for Rivers</b> - Involving Children and Youths in River Protection	<b>Samuel Halter &amp; Ema Breščak</b> , River Collective <b>Gjorgji Mitrevski</b> , Eko-Svest	This workshop will draw on insights from several years of river protection advocacy involving children and art students, and introduce the outdoor classroom method, which has recently been tried and tested during the Neretva Students for Rivers Camp for engaging with riverine landscapes. The workshop will close with a group discussion as well as the collection of further methods known by participants.
<b>WS8: Mental Ecology</b> – understanding and perceiving the preservation of nature through contemporary art	<b>Milena Živković</b> , Independent Artist	This Social Sculpture workshop, part of the Mental Ecology program, is an interactive eco-art project connecting contemporary art and applied ecology. Participants will discover and unleash their creative potential, becoming agents of micro-environmental actions that foster personal development and community improvement. Join us to activate your creativity and positively influence the preservation of the environment in a different way!
<b>WS9: Arts for Rivers</b> - Spreading the message for wild and free rivers through art	<b>Iva Korbar</b> , Ljubav Za Ričinu	Putting art in context requires skill in expressing the needs, situations, and hardships tied to the “river-human phenomenon.” Both river protection and art aim to expand life, broadening our perceptions and exploring the depths of our shared existence or destruction. This workshop offers a glimpse of that experience, soothing and sharpening your senses as a foundation for creating art. If possible, we will work outdoors by the river.
<b>WS10: Art as watershed stewardship</b> – Thinking about river protection through clay	<b>Kelsey Aho</b> , Geoartist	This is a creative workshop. Following a brief introduction to secondary clay, we will discuss how dams can reduce access to the clay relied on by ceramic artists. Then we will make clay tiles. This is a great workshop for introverts, art enthusiasts, and/or those who want to get dirty.



# SPEAKER BIOS

## **Aleš Skalič**

Aleš Skalič is a project manager at the RDA Development centre Murska Sobota, where they implement programmes and projects focused on making the region more sustainable. Passionate about creating a greener, stronger future, they help shape initiatives that boost both the environment and the local communities.

## **Amelie Huber**

Amelie is freshwater project manager at EuroNatur Foundation, co-coordinates the Blue Heart campaign and has been lead organizer of the Balkan River Summit 2024. She holds a PhD in Political Ecology and has carried out extensive research on the social impacts and politics associated with hydropower conflicts in the Eastern Himalayas, India.

## **Andrej Sovinc**

Andrej is an ornithologist and a protected areas/natural resource management consultant with a doctorate in protected area systems. He has vast experience in the planning, establishment, and management of protected areas, including Natura 2000 sites and has been active in international conservation since 1995. As the former European Vice-Chair of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas he has coordinated a network of over 700 experts since 2012.

## **Andrijana Mićanovic**

Andrijana is a biodiversity researcher specialising in herpetofauna and batrachofauna. As co-director of the Montenegrin Ecologists Society, she coordinates projects focused on endangered species and habitat conservation, especially in freshwater ecosystems. She is actively involved in mapping and establishing the Natura 2000 network and is one of the key initiators of the “Save Komarnica” initiative, dedicated to protecting the Komarnica Canyon.

## **Annette Spangenberg**

Annette is the Head of the Freshwater Programme and part of the Senior Management Team at EuroNatur Foundation. She has been with the organization since 2002 and has been involved in the campaign “Save the Blue Heart of Europe” since its inception in 2011/2012. As a mother of two girls (9 & 12) she is dedicated to preserving nature for future generations.

## **Azra Berbić**

Azra is a long-time environmental, human rights and peace building activist and a lawyer, she is a member of Foundation Atelier for Community Transformation - ACT.

## **Besar Likmeta**

Besar is the Country Editor for BIRN Albania since 2007 and serves as the country correspondent for Balkan Insight. He has worked in journalism across print, television, and electronic media in the US and Albania since 2003. In 2009, he won the CEI/SEEMO Award for Investigative Journalism. Besar studied philosophy at the University of North Florida.

## **Bonnie Barclay**

Bonnie is a Communications Consultant at Rising Action Strategies and formerly served as Global Communications Manager for International Rivers, where she led strategic initiatives to amplify the voices of communities impacted by harmful river projects. With over 25 years of experience in environmental and social justice advocacy, Bonnie has worked with organisations like Greenpeace, MoveOn, and UCLA's Institute of the Environment. She holds dual Bachelor's degrees in Wildlife, Fish & Conservation Biology and Environmental Science, specialising in Policy and Watershed Management.

## **Branka Knežević**

Branka is a biologist, working in local self-government for over 15 years in the Secretariat for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development, Capital City Podgorica, competent for environmental topics on a local level.

## **Bruno D'Amicis**

Bruno is a renowned nature photographer with a background in biological sciences. His award-winning work has been featured in global publications like National Geographic, GEO, & Smithsonian. In addition to his photography, Bruno has authored eight books, produced three documentaries, and led several conservation projects.

## **Chris Vettos**

Chris is working for REScoop.eu, the European Federation of Energy Cooperatives, and Electra Energy (Greece). Both organisations promote the active engagement of citizens in renewable energy production in Europe. He has worked on multiple research programs as an assistant, on topics like the EU Green Deal and degrowth.

## **Cornelia Wieser**

Conny has been involved in the Blue Heart campaign since 2013 and is responsible for public relations, partner coordination, event planning, etc. She was the lead organiser of the Balkan Rivers Days 2015 (Belgrade) and the European Rivers Summit 2018 (Sarajevo), helping to unite the movement for river protection across Europe.

## **Danijel Loncar**

Danijel is a communication expert with a knack for storytelling and connecting people to important causes. He leads teams in designing meaningful campaigns, focusing on nature conservation and community engagement, looking for ways to reconnect people and rivers through storytelling.

## **Dejan Mijović**

Dejan is an economist with over 30 years of experience in supporting development and reforms across Southeast Europe, South America, and Central America. He has worked as an advisor and project manager for a wide range of organisations, various government and private institutions, and international development and financial organisations such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

## **Dijana Kleinberg**

Dijana aka Daya Bio Daya is an International Kundalini Teacher from Suvaja. Her work is focused on teaching people about their own infinite potential. Through Kundalini workshops she facilitates activations of this primal energy. Her life in the jungles of Mexico and Brazil ignited deeper connection with sacred waters. She is a member of the group “Initiative Save Una”.

## **Dragan Hajduković**

Dragan is a Montenegrin physics professor, astrophysicist, and physicist affiliated with CERN, as well as an environmental activist and humanist with a deep love for nature. In the beginning of 90s, he launched the project “Toward the First Ecological State,” leading to Montenegro becoming the first country to declare itself an ecological state in its constitution.

## **Elena Kokthi**

Elena is an Associate Professor with 13 years of experience, specialising in EU Policy and its implementation in Albania. At the Agriculture University of Tirana, she has contributed to numerous European Commission research projects, focusing on sustainability, climate change, and urban agriculture. Her work centres on economic behaviour and sustainable development, with several scientific publications exploring the Green Deal and institutional challenges.

## **Ema Breščak**

Ema is a marine biologist and an ecologist from Slovenia, currently working for REVIVO - Institute for ichthyological and ecological research. She also works with the River Collective as part of their organising team for this year's SRC Neretva 2024 in Ulog, BiH.

## **Fanourios-Nikolaos Sakellarakis**

Fanourios-Nikolaos is an ecologist specialising in biodiversity conservation, with a degree in Forestry and a Master's in Ecology. He worked at Prespa National Park in Greece researching vegetation dynamics and later joined the Society for the Protection of Prespa, creating one of Greece's most detailed floristic inventories. In 2022, he joined MedINA, where he currently is Conservation Coordinator, leading the Freshwater Ecosystems Pillar.



**Gjorgji Mitrevski**

Gjorgji is Water Programme Coordinator at Eko-Svest. He leads public awareness campaigns by collaborating with artists, art collectives, cultural and educational organizations. Along with introducing citizen science and supporting protected area authorities in monitoring river conditions, he is engaged in establishing new protected areas, promoting proactive and long-term river conservation efforts.

**Hasan Hadžiablahović**

Hasan is a young botanist, expert in mapping Natura 2000 habitats, and currently employed in the Municipality of Tuzi as a Senior Adviser for Ecology, Sustainable Development and Environment Protection.

**Iva Korbar**

Iva founded the artistic platform Ljubav za Ričinu in autumn 2020 for recognition and protection of river Rječina, city of Rijeka. Playful, dynamic creation at many fields is her drive. Iva does site-specific performing arts in nature, writes acrobatic texts, creates poetic videos, does PR, guides people in mountains, islands etc.

**Irma Popović Dujmović**

Irma is a Freshwater Program Director for Croatia at The Nature Conservancy. She has more than 20 years of experience working for the non-governmental sector in policy, advocacy, education, and promotion of river ecosystem conservation, public participation, and integrated river basin management.

**Iva Kljajević**

Iva holds a master’s degree in ecology from the University of Montenegro. She was awarded a Ceepus scholarship at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna. As a researcher, she primarily studies the structure and growth of freshwater fish populations. She has contributed to environmental conservation projects and co-authored a study on the growth of the Skadar chub.

**Ivana Čogurić**

Ivana is a journalist, author, and environmental activist. Since 2021, she has been part of the women-led ecological movement, Ekopatriotizam. In 2023, she directed two short documentaries, & "Mislov until 2003" and "Pileta Piletović". Recognised for her environmental activism, she was named Eco Volunteer and later Eco Ambassador of Montenegro by the Environmental Protection Agency, honouring her efforts in community-led protests and removing illegal landfills.

**Jasenska Lalović**

Jasenska was born in Bar in 1965 and is a writer known for her trilogy “Hills of sage”. The novels explore the role of women in Montenegrin society in the early 20th century, highlighting the significance of those who have been forgotten. Her next novel, “Bastadur”, is based on the similar concept, but is focused on men of Montenegro. She is married, has four children, and lives in Belgrade.

**Jelena Jovičić-Petrović**

Jelena is a professor of environmental microbiology at the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Belgrade. She is also an initiator and active member of the local citizens’ initiative Waterkeepers of Mionica (Ne damo vode Mionice) and a member of the coordination committee of The Network of Academic Solidarity and Engagement.

**Jelena Marojević Galić**

Jelena holds a degree from the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences with a specialisation in Biology and has over 15 years of experience in the civil sector. In 2007, she joined the NGO Green Home, where she was involved in several environmental protection campaigns, including the one against the construction of dams on the Morača River.

**Jelena Popović**

Jelena is co-director of the Montenegrin Ecologists Society and one of the key founders of the Save Komarnica initiative. As a biologist and junior dendrochronologist, she is deeply involved in biodiversity research and conservation. She studies local flora and habitats in the Montenegrin mountains and canyons and a significant part of her work focuses on translating nature’s complexities into educational and artistic expressions.

**Jovana Popović**

Jovana is a Social Media Manager at MES with a background in English language and literature (Spec.) and Painting (BA), currently pursuing an MA in Intermedia at the University of Montenegro. Skilled in content creation, graphic design, video editing, and fluent in multiple languages.

**Jovana Đukanović**

Jovana is the founder and CEO of Extraterrestre, a PR, marketing, and events agency. She has an MA in European Studies and is President of the Rotaract Club Podgorica. Jovana has taught at La Sapienza University and the University of Montenegro, and is a selected lecturer in the upcoming “Ready for EU” program, by the Government of Montenegro.

**Kelsey Aho**

Kelsey is the Watershed Program Manager for Europe & Eurasia with the U.S. Forest Service. In southeast Europe, she maps floods and dams, supports environmental education and scientific research, and fundraises. Outside of work, she collects local river clays which we can hold and explore how the different rivers look and feel.

**Kirsi Hyvaerinen**

Kirsi has worked with NGOs, governments, and international development agencies in tourism and destination management since the mid-1990s. She founded her own consultancy in 2013, focusing on capacity building, sustainable tourism, and destination branding. Kirsi also co-founded the Balkan Green initiative, serves on the Management Board of the Global Ecotourism Network, and represents Green Destinations in Montenegro.

**Leonard Sonten**

Leo is freshwater project manager at EuroNatur, focusing on the “Blue Heart of Europe” initiative. He spent the last 15 years working abroad in the fields of aquaponics and marine science. Now, he is dedicating his expertise to coordinating efforts for a sustainable future for the rivers of the Balkans.

**Malgorzata Smolak**

Malgorzata is an environmental and energy lawyer who collaborates with NGOs to protect river ecosystems, decarbonise the energy sector, and improve air quality. She is involved in the Save the Blue Heart of Europe campaign and the Lawyers for Rivers initiative. Previously, she led the Climate and Energy team at ClientEarth, Poland.

**Mihela Hladin Wolfe**

Mihela has worked in environmental protection for more than two decades. As a part of the Patagonia team, she worked on local and global environmental campaigns. Before that, she founded and ran a social enterprise in China that raised environmental awareness for youth and helped companies implement their sustainability strategies.

**Milan Niković**

Milan is an energy engineer with considerable experience in renewable energy project development, an expert in solar technology innovation and energy storage systems, and co-founder of the Montengrin Institute for Renewable Energy and New Technologies.

**Milena Živković**

Milena is a multimedia visual artist with a graduate and master’s degree from the Faculty of Fine Arts (FLU) at the University of Montenegro. She has exhibited her work both in Montenegro and internationally. Milena is the author of the ecological art project Mental Ecology and the creative course Discipline of Imagination, both reflecting her innovative approach to art and the environment. She lives and works along the Cetinje-Podgorica route.

**Miljko Bulajić (Gigo)**

Gigo is the founder of Balkan Expeditions and Nature Lovers. Through innovative eco-tourism practices like the International Kayak and Ski Tour Fest, he connects people with Montenegro’s rich cultural heritage and natural landscapes. He is one of the founders of the Save Komarnica initiative.



**Milka Tadić Mijović**

Milka is a Montenegrin journalist, media executive and international civic activist. She is president of the Centre for Investigative Journalism of Montenegro. Her investigative reporting articles exposing abuse of power, high-level corruption and destruction of nature have earned her both numerous threats and journalistic excellence awards. Reporters Without Borders included her in their first ever list of '100 Information Heroes' in 2014.

**Nadija Čehajić**

Nadija is a student from Bosnia and Herzegovina, currently studying Limnology in Vienna at BOKU university. Her previous studies in water technologies have brought the importance of water into her life. Activism against small hydropower in her home country has inspired her to get involved and she was part of the organizing team of this year's Student's for rivers camp in BiH on Neretva river.

**Nicoleta Nour**

Nicoleta is an activist with the Slovenian Native Fish Society. Her research and collaboration interests include Sava River restoration, rewilding, and degrowth.

**Olsi Nika**

Olsi is a biologist with an MSc in Environmental Biology and a PhD candidate in Conservation Biology. He has 10+ years of experience in environmental policy, civil society, and nature conservation. Since 2013, Olsi has led projects on environmental protection and advocacy. He is the co-founder and Executive Director of EcoAlbania, specializing in biodiversity, aquatic ecosystems, and conservation.

**Paule Gros**

Paule earned a PhD in Conservation Biology from UC Davis. She is the founder and CEO of BiodivEarth, an NGO focusing on the resilience of conservation practices. For 14 years, she led the MAVA Foundation's Mediterranean Program. She advises Tour du Valat, DIMFE and CEPF boards.

**Prince Nikola Petrović Njegoš**

Prince is a French-Montenegrin retired architect and founder of the Cetinje Biennale. He serves as President of the Petrovic Njegos Foundation, focusing on solidarity, ecology, and culture. He is a Knight of the Legion of Honor (France) and received the World Prize 2024 from the Ohrid Academy of Humanism.

**Rastko Ajtić**

Dr. Rastko Ajtić, assistant professor in courses Comparative Morphology, Anatomy, and Systematics of Chordates, is the former leader of the project "Integrated River Basin Management of the Sava River". 17 years of experience in nature protection in Serbia. Worked on the influence of SHP on biodiversity.

**Roel Wouters**

Roel is a PhD researcher at the Department of Ecology at Charles University in Prague, Czechia. He studies ecology and evolution of reptiles and amphibians and does fieldwork worldwide. He took part in two expeditions to the Komarnica Canyon in Montenegro with the European Biodiversity Survey and co-authored the resulting report.

**Roxanne Diaz**

Roxanne is a freelance communications consultant who has been involved in the Blue Heart campaign since 2021. She has supported the team with press relations, social media management, and outreach.

**Samuel Halter**

Samuel is a member of the River Collective and part of the organising team for the Students for Rivers Camp 2024 at the Neretva. He has a master's in Global Change Ecology.

**Sanja Sevo**

Sanja currently lives in Donja Suvaja near the Una source. She is a special education teacher, local activist, nature lover and member of the group "Initiative Save Una".

**Steven Weiss**

Steven has been in academia for over 25 years, teaching and conducting research focused on freshwater ecosystems. A lifelong advocate for river conservation, he has become deeply involved in efforts to protect the remaining free-flowing rivers, particularly from the threats posed by hydropower exploitation.

**Tamara Brajović**

Tamara is a biologist and served as Director of the Directorate for Nature Protection (2021-2024) within the Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development, and Northern Region Development. She specializes in Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures.

**Tamara Preininger Horvat**

Tamara is a freshwater ecologist with seven years of professional experience in relevant governmental institutions and non-profit organisations. She is currently implementing TNC's nature protection strategy in Southeast Europe and is managing freshwater and restoration projects as the SEE Programme Manager.

**Tara Ariell Sukic**

Tara is a multi-passionate nature conservationist with background in Biology and Environmental Sciences. She entered the realm of river conservation in 2019 as a project manager at EuroNatur. Since then, she has been engaged in multiple campaigns and projects safeguarding rivers throughout the Balkans.

**Ulrich Eichelmann**

Ulrich is the CEO of the NGO Riverwatch and co-coordinates the Save the Blue Heart of Europe campaign. From 1991-2007 he worked for WWF Austria, mostly for the protection of rivers and against dam projects. In 2012, he produced the film Climate Crimes, a documentary about the misuse of climate protection and the consequences of so-called "green energies".

**Vanja Lazić**

Vanja is a graphic designer and illustrator from BiH. With over 15 years of experience, she has successfully cooperated with organisations from different sectors of human rights and nature preservation. As an illustrator, she has focused on using illustration to contribute to awareness-raising and socially responsible projects.

**Viktor Berishaj**

Viktor is an economist specialising in sustainable development, with a robust background in policy making in Western Balkans and Brussels. He is the Senior Policy Officer at the EuroNatur's Brussels office, with a fundamental role in advancing biodiversity conservation efforts across Europe.

**Vuk Iković**

Vuk is a PhD student in Conservation Biology, a member of the political movement Preokret, and a councillor in the local parliament of Danilovgrad municipality. For the past 15 years, he has been actively involved in environmental impact assessments and the establishment and monitoring of protected nature areas in Montenegro.

**Vuk Vujisić**

Vuk is an environmental activist and journalist who has spent years fighting against criminal activities that threaten Montenegrin natural resources. His work is particularly noted for his efforts to combat the brutal destruction and devastation of the Morača Riverbed, caused by years of gravel and sand exploitation. In addition, Vuk is the founder of the initiative "Let's Green Montenegro" aimed at reforestation and greening of degraded areas.

**Žaklina Žiković**

Žaklina is the Executive Director of Polekol. In her 12 years of work on green policies, she specialised in working with local communities on public advocacy for better environmental standards. She is also a Women's Network for Nature member and the Secretariat of the regional network Let Defend the Rivers of Balkans.





# NOTES

