

Balkan Rivers News



Dear Friends of the Balkan Rivers,

The last few months were mainly marked by the Balkan Rivers Tour. To keep you updated, please find the key news below. The Blue Heart Team wishes you a great summer – maybe you spend some time at a river!

BALKAN RIVERS TOUR

*** In kayaks through the Balkans**

The Balkan Rivers Tour – an initiative of kayakers, who wanted to draw attention to the looming dam tsunami in the region – took place from April 16 to May 20. A total of [23 rivers in 6 Balkan countries were being paddled](#), [500 kayakers](#) participated. They were accompanied by a film team, international as well as local media, and hundreds of spectators. Find impressions in our galleries: [PHOTOS](#), [VIDEOS](#)

Highlights of the tour include the [opening flotilla event on the idyllic Lake Bohinj](#) – headwater of the Save – in Slovenia, or the [protest against the KELAG dam construction on the Huchen river Sana](#) in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Another [protest activity against hydropower projects in the context of the tour was organized in the Mavrovo National Park](#). The grand finale took place at the Vjosa in Albania. Ulrike Lunacek – Vice President of the European Parliament – supported the campaign “Save the Blue Heart of Europe” at [this activity at the banks of the Vjosa](#). The tour ended with a [kayak protest in Tirana](#) and the attempt to hand over the petition kayak to the Albanian Prime Minister. ...

Selected media coverage: [Lifegate](#), [Reuters](#), [Balkan Insight](#), [7sky.life](#), [Delo](#), [Top Channel](#), [IN TV Albania](#), [OraNews](#)



Buna channel rapid right before the confluence with Neretva river, Bosnia © Jan Pirnat



Tour finale on May 18 at the Vjosa, Albania. River friends gathered behind letters, seven meters high. © Oblak Aljaz



Tirana: the Balkan Rivers Tour ends in a protest activity and the attempt to hand over the petition kayak. © Andrew Burr

VJOSA

*** Scientists criticize dam projects on the Vjosa**

In early June, experts from Austria and Germany met with scientists from Albania in Tirana to discuss the future of the Vjosa river. They adopted a joint position paper, which was handed over to the Albanian Ministry of the Environment. Their demands include a 3-year-moratorium on construction plans on the Vjosa and her tributaries in order to carry out a comprehensive research project on this widely unexplored river. [More](#)

Media coverage: [Reporter.al](#), [Top Channel](#)



Scientists from Albania, Austria and Germany at the Vjosa © EuroNatur

*** Vjosa Story wins first price at Environmental Film Festival Albania**

We are proud to announce that Leeway Collective's kayak documentary "One for the River - The Vjosa Story" was awarded the first price at the Environmental Film Festival Albania. The film was winner of the most significant category of the festival "long films". We congratulate Rok and his team for this great achievement! [More](#)



At the award ceremony © Olta Hadushaj

*** EU Parliament criticizes Albanian dam plans**

In April, the European Parliament criticized the Albanian government for projected hydropower projects and called upon them to be more considerate of protected areas and other sensitive nature areas. This is particularly true for the Vjosa, so the statement of the EU Parliament in regards to the Enlargement Report of the EU Commission. [More](#)

Media coverage: [OraNews](#), [Reporter.al](#)



The Vjosa. The EU calls for its protection, but the Albanian government wants to build hydropower plants © Christian Baumgartner

MAVROVO NATIONAL PARK

*** Administrative court stops licence for hydropower plant in Mavrovo National Park**

According to an official statement by the Macedonian administrative court, plans for the large hydropower project Boskov Most in the Macedonian Mavrovo National Park are devoid of any legal basis. With this, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is more than overdue to irretrievably withdraw its funding of the project. [More](#)



The river Radika in the Mavrovo National Park would be affected by the planned hydropower plant Boskov Most. © Theresa Schiller/EuroNatur

*** New hope for Mavrovo National Park**

Good news just before Christmas: upon the recommendation of the Berne Convention, the World Bank withdrew its funding for one of the two big hydropower projects inside Mavrovo National Park in Macedonia. This is another stage win for the protection of Balkan rivers from the destruction by the hydro lobby. [More](#)



Mavrovo NP is home to the last known reproducing population of the critically endangered Balkan Lynx © Jörg Pukownik

GENERAL

*** The Biggest Dam-Removal Project in History**

While 2700 dams are projected to be built between Slovenia and Albania, dams are being torn down one after another in the US in order to restore their rivers. Now, the removal of four hydroelectric dams on the Klamath River has been approved, rendering it the biggest dam removal project in history: [report in the Guardian](#). In line with this, watch [what happens to a river when you give it its flow back!](#)

This Will Be the Biggest Dam-Removal Project in History



More than 400 miles of the Klamath River system that have been blocked for a century will open up for people and wildlife.



*** The end of hydropower: the world goes solar**

While in the Balkans and elsewhere hydropower is still being expanded, the global trend is reverse. For the first time in 2015, more solar and wind capacities have been constructed globally than all coal, oil, hydropower and nuclear power plants combined. Read the [report with the newest energy data by Peter Bosshart, International Rivers](#)



No more sacrificing of our rivers for hydropower. The world goes solar. © Jan Pirnat

***Energy provider Verbund: Too much electricity in Europe, not the time for new HPPs**

Europe's biggest hydropower corporation – the Austrian Verbund AG – is complaining about too much electricity on the European market. In the ORF Radio Ö1, Chairman of the Verbund Managing Board Wolfgang Anzengruber says on March 9: “It is not the time for extensive new projects in the power plant sector over the next few years. That would not be clever in a time with too much energy”. [More](#)



Chairman of the Verbund Managing Board Anzengruber © VERBUND

*** Petition: Stop HPPs on Valbona River!**

Another Albanian river at risk: the beautiful Valbona river is facing the construction of several planned hydropower plants along its course, not stopping at national parks and other strictly protected area - as so often the case. Local communities are protesting and need your help: please [sign and share the petition](#) addressed to Prime Minister Edi Rama!



The Valbona, still flowing freely. © Jan Pirnat

*** The Balkan Rivers story on Patagonia's blog**

The Balkan Rivers have already been featured on Patagonia's blog „The Cleanest Line“ twice:

In March: [Save the Blue Heart of Europe: The Balkan Rivers story](#)

In June: [Save the Blue Heart of Europe: 23 Rivers, 6 Countries, 390 River Kilometers, 1 Purpose](#)



**All the best,
Your Blue Heart Team**