

Hydropower Projects in Protected Areas on the Balkans

Summary

This study quantifies the number of hydropower projects that are planned within protected areas on the Balkan Peninsula. A total of 1,640 projected hydropower plants (HPPs) have been examined based on a detailed and categorised network of protected areas. The database actually contains hydropower plants with a capacity of >1 MW, but for particular national parks and campaign areas (Mavrovo NP in Macedonia, Albanian NPs, Huchen stretches in the Sava catchment and for Serbia) smaller projected hydropower plants were also taken into account.

51 National Parks and 64 Ramsar Sites/Biosphere Reserves/UNESCO World Heritage Nature Sites can be found in the entire study area. Combined with Natura 2000 areas in SI/HR/BG and GR as well as the strictly protected national reserves in non-EU countries, the region features a quite dense network of protected areas. However, in BA, RS, ME, KV, MK and AL many areas are weakly protected or Emerald sites are still not confined or clearly designated.

Protected areas were categorized into five groups and overlapped with the hydropower data. Some dam projects fit into more than one category, however, for overall results, double counting was eliminated ("*further in*"), so that projects are only counted in the highest category. The results are as follows:

1. National parks: 113 (7%), *further in*
2. Ramsar/Biosphere Reserves/UNESCO World Heritage Nature Sites: 23 (1%), *further in*
3. Natura 2000: 131 (8%), *further in*
4. National, strictly protected areas: 268 (16%), *further in*
5. Other protected areas: 282 (17%).

A total of 535 planned projects or 32 % fall in strictly protected areas. In addition, 282 HPPs (17 %) are projected inside other protected areas with a weaker protection status. **Altogether, 817 or 49% of all projected HPPs fall in protected areas.**

The results indicate a very high pressure of hydropower on protected sites. The construction of hydropower plants within even strictly protected areas is not the exception but rather the rule. In areas with the highest protection status even small hydropower are not acceptable as a sustainable solution.