



FACTSHEET

2012

Conservation

# Challenges to Danube Wetlands

Inland navigation



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**The Danube is Europe's lifeline. Flowing through 10 countries on its nearly 3,000 km journey from the Black Forest in Germany to the Black Sea, for centuries the river has connected people and nature. The Danube provides us with essential benefits and services, including drinking water, recreation and biological diversity. For centuries, Danube fish and other wildlife have been a source of food and livelihoods.**

## Fit the ships to the river, not the river to the ships

Over the years, the Danube and some of its main tributaries have served as important trade routes across Europe. Today, ships can navigate 87% of the river's total length. But navigation has radically changed the river's physical and ecological characteristics.

Artificial deepening, regulation and damming have destroyed some of Europe's great river landscapes and wetlands – and further development could destroy those that remain.

## Current approaches to shipping are old fashioned, expensive and unnecessary

Traditional approaches focus on adapting the river to the ever-deeper ships, rather than promoting new technologies in ship design, logistics and communications that can increase shipping capacities while limiting environmental impact. Further

diking and dredging threatens the loss of not only the spectacular natural values of the river, but also of a multitude of benefits and services on which people depend, from drinking water and flood management to fishing, tourism and recreation.

87%

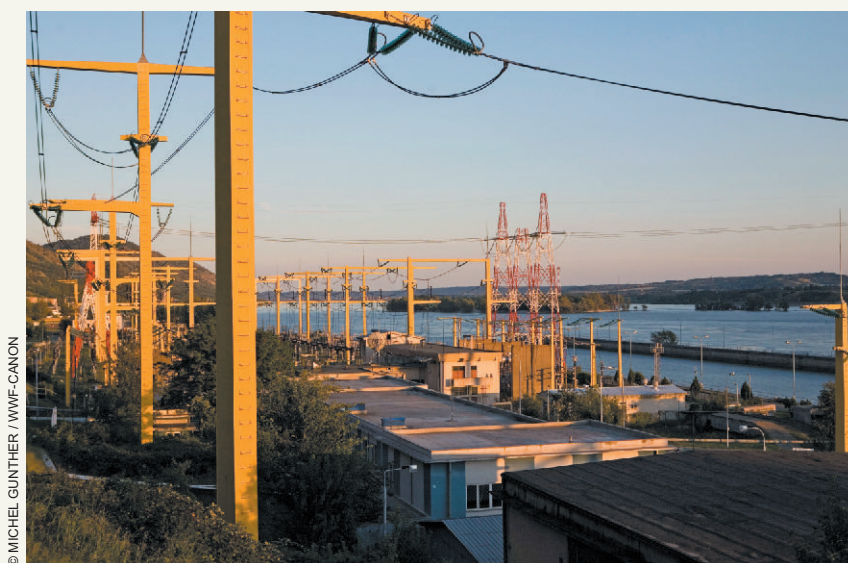
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## The price to pay for canalizing the river will be too high

WWF analyses show that further diking and dredging would lead to incision of the river bed and sinking of the ground water that is connected with it, drying out of wells and riparian wetlands. Worryingly, in the new European strategies the name of the Danube is often replaced simply with the phrase “part of Corridor VII” of the trans-European transport network, and the whole Lower Danube is referred to as “a navigation bottleneck that is to be improved”.

## A way forward – the Joint Statement on Navigation

In 2007, a dialogue process led by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, the Sava and Danube River Commissions brought together navigation and environmental interests to agree a way forward for developing navigation while safeguarding environmental and other values. The resulting "Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin", which has been agreed by the Danube countries and key stakeholders, sets out key principles to guide further navigation development, including integrated planning involving environmental and other interests in project development from the beginning. The principles, which support implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, are now being applied to navigation development on the section between Vienna and Bratislava.



**Why we are here.**

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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