River Continuity Restoration in France

Session 1 : How can the EU Biodiversity strategy help achieve the WFD objectives and vice-versa?

French Office for biodiversity (OFB)

26 May 2021

European River Symposium
Barriers in Europe from AMBER Atlas (2020)
Transversal structures

In France:
- Up to 100,000 structures
- 1 every 2 km
- 30% obsolete

(OFB 2019)

Check our Dataviz
National bases for action:

Law on Water and Aquatic Environments of 30 December 2006 (text of the law), some rivers stretches are classified in:

• LIST 1: river stretches to preserve the river continuity => NO NEW OBSTACLES ALLOWED: it includes high ecological status rivers, migratory fish rivers stretches acting as biological reservoirs: 30 % of river stretches;

• LIST 2: river stretches to RESTORE THE RIVER CONTINUITY: where sediment transport and fish migration have to be ensured: 11% of rivers stretches, 24% of transversal structures

Funding river restoration projects
• Public funding for mitigation measures or barrier removal: up to 80 %, from the 6 Water Agencies, from regional, departmental or local authorities, Europe, …
Actual objectives in France

Set in 2018 in National Biodiversity strategy, action 39 to restore 50,000 km of river by 2030

Set in 2020 in Water Meetings Assises de l’eau action 9 to restore 25,000 km of rivers by 2022
Provisional and partial results
(source OFB pole écohydraulique)

7212 barriers have been evaluated on 21450 km of river on list 2 rivers (migratory fish rivers) of several French regions:

- 930 have been removed (13%) which represented 2607 km of free flowing rivers
- 1600 had partial or complete mitigation measures (22%)
Weir removal of mill Moulin de Ver, Sienne river, Normandy, 2010

Liste 1 and 2 – migratory fish river, weir without usage, in bad state
Obstacle at all times even with gates open
  ➔ restoration of spawning habitat
  ➔ improvement of the chemical water quality

Crédits : Fabien Goulmy – FDPPMA 50
Vezin Dam removal, Selune river, Normandy, January 2020
Weir mitigation measure, Moulin Cadoux, Cousin river, Burgundy, 2015

Before works:
weir of water mill Moulin

After works:
mitigation measure in place on water mill ‘s weir:
• weir lowering
• rock ramp construction
Amendment voted in April 2021 prevents removing transversal structures, considered as potential for hydropower.

Under pressure of water mill owners associations, who fear of losing their built heritage and hydropower capacities.

Only mitigation measures allowed.
What ways forward?

• To explain better
  • 1) Why to restore continuity
  • 2) What are the possible technical solutions

• To provide more technical and social support to the owners of hydraulic structures

• To improve conciliation of economic, renewable energy targets and ecological interests