

Field excursion 2: ERRC2014 – SEE River Project Event

Restoration of Danube side-arms at Wachau

The very scenic Danube gorge of the Wachau hosts one of the oldest and most attractive cultural landscapes in Europe. It combines steep mountain slopes with extended vineyards and orchards, medieval villages, castle ruins and famous monasteries (World Heritage Site) with river cruising, wine tasting and cycling along the Danube, thus making it a top tourist destination.

The attractive character of the Wachau is also due to the fact that it remained one of Austria's two non-impounded Danube sections, though past waterway regulation led to various degradations. Over the last ten years several EU-LIFE projects substantially improved the river-floodplain systems. During this trip we will visit the most impressive reconnected and restored Danube side-arms (improved hydro-morphology, fish migration and flood retention). The project proponents, having consulted their plans with local stakeholders, will explain how they integrated the interests of navigation, flood protection, recreation and local land uses with ecology.

The trip will start at the upper Wachau with the 7km long Schallemmersdorf-Grimsing side-arm system and its restored large gravel banks. For re-establishing ecological dynamics, large sediment volumes had to be excavated from silted-up side-arms and used for restoring shallow bank habitats. Returning back over the Danube, next stop will be the rebuilt mouth of Pielach river, a pre-alpine tributary that is very important for spawning of Danube fish. The travel along the famous cycling route bypasses the restored Schönbühel side-branch. After lunch at the wine village of Rührsdorf, the successful combination of ecological flood protection with modern technical dike structures will be shown. A walk along the restored side-arm will serve to look at Danube salmon habitats and end at Rossatz island with its new gravel banks and floodplain forest.

Tentative timing: 8:30 Start at from Tech Gate Vienna (conference venue)
Lunch at typical restaurant in Wachau (*included!*)
18:30 Arrival at Tech Gate Vienna

Field trip hosts and guides:

Arbeitskreis Wachau (Workgroup Wachau Regional Development)
Freiwasser Consultants for Ecology, Engineering and Water Management
viadonau Austrian waterways agency



Danube salmon at spawning site © IHG



The reconnected Danube side-arms and flood Plain island at Rührsdorf. © Markus Haslinger



Silted-up side-arms prior to restoration works. © viadonau



Top and below: The reconnected Schallengersdorf-Grimsing side-arm system after removing bank protection (riprap) and low-water regulation barriers © Haslinger, Seehofer

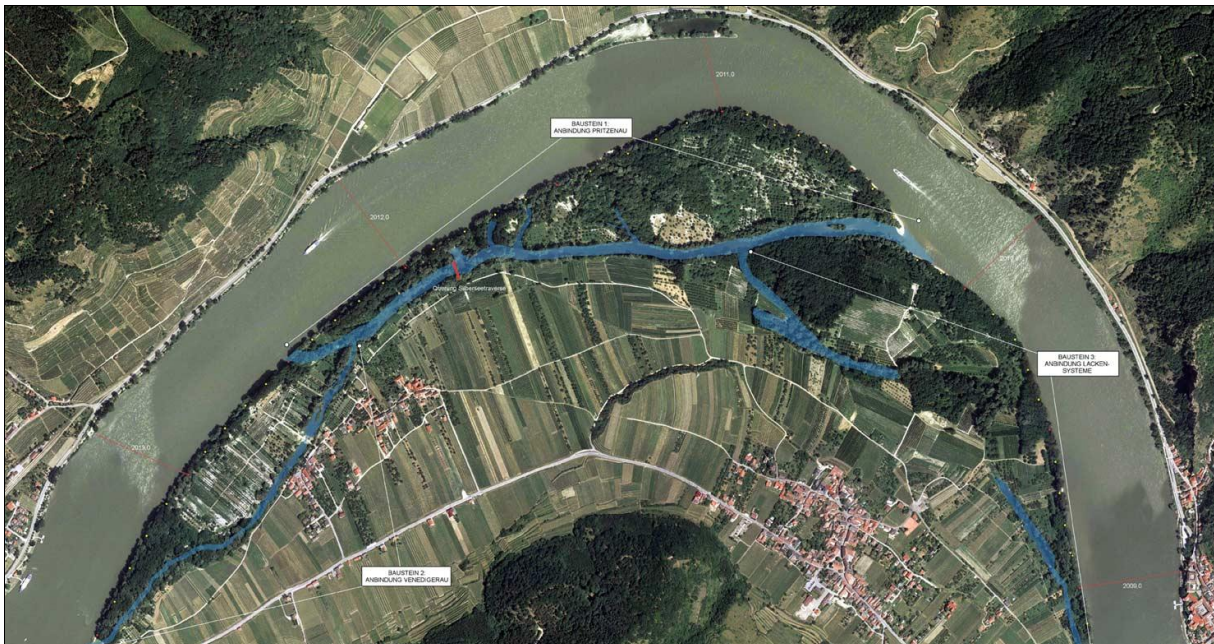




The rebuilt mouth of Pielach river and side-arm serves at Restoring fish migration from/into the Danube © G. Pock



Common nase © EZB Zauner



Top and below: The Ruhrsdorf-Rossatz side-arm system

© Freiwasser

