

Restoring Europe's Rivers

RESTORE Events: Reporting

Field Visit in Poland

11-15 June 2012

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Event Details

The North Region RR field visit in Poland included a seminar in Warsaw on 12 June, where the establishment of the Polish RR Network was discussed, and a field visit to several RR cases in Southern Poland around Krakow 13-15 June 2012. The field visit is action C5 in the bid.

Key Issues from the Event

Key issue for the time in Warsaw was to promote establishing a national RR network in Poland. The network was prepared by the meeting attended by Jukka Jormola from RESTORE and Bart Fokkens from ECRR in February 2012.

The second target of the field visit was to explore the state of river restorations in Poland. This included analyses of the structure of the Polish environment administration, level of RR knowhow, volume of river restorations and the main problems to accomplish RR in Poland.

In terms of RESTORE, our key issues were:

- To find out the river restoration status in Poland, to get familiar with Polish river restoration cases, which could be taken into the RESTORE wiki-database
- To help creating a watercourse restoration network in Poland
- To introduce the RESTORE project to relevant Polish RR actors
- To promote the RESTORE products, such as www-pages, wiki-database and contacts database

Key Outcomes

The main focus of the field excursion was to find out what kind of river restorations have been performed in Poland and what are the main actors and largest hindrances for river restorations in Poland. During the field excursion it became clear that there are very different rivers and action models in Northern and Southern Poland, partly due to geography.

In Northern Poland the number of river restorations is rather small. Lack of appropriate sanitation infrastructure, financial resources, restoration knowhow and practitioners seem to be the main hindrances for restorations as the main problems still include bad water quality. Large, mainly hydropower related dams without functioning fishways are a problem for the migration of fish.



Recently finished fishway at Grybow, Southern Poland. The fishway seems functional, but could be made of natural stones to maximize the benefits for fish and landscape (see right hand side photo).

In Southern Poland rivers run along Carpathian Mountains and are characterized by steep slopes, high energy and mostly clear water. Main needs for river restoration include illegal extraction of stones and gravel from river beds for building material, landslides on limestone areas, building of dam reservoirs and check dams and channel modifications. The main hindrances for river restoration are small number of skilful practitioners and lack of regional environmental authorities with responsibility for RR. The main actors promoting river restoration are Universities in Krakow, where the research of fluvial geomorphology has lead to first restoration schemes in the upper reaches of river flowing from the Carpathians.



Landslides and erosion are a problem e.g. at Biala River in Southern Poland.

One major problem in Southern Poland has been the lack of appropriate restoration methods for small high energy streams, but methods have lately been developed. There are researchers from Krakow Pedagogical University, Krakow Technical University and Polish Academy of Sciences, who have made research and developed methods for these mountainous streams. The methods are described in scientific articles listed at the chapter Dissemination of the Event Outcomes.



Re-placing gravel to the river allows restoration to create e.g. vegetated islands and bottom sills to diversify the current flow. Photo from restored site at Białka River.

In both North and South Poland the water area of rivers is owned by the state. Land owners are able to perform any restoration measures if they ask for the permit from a government authority. It seems that such a permit is given rather easily and does not require neither a plan of measures nor a monitoring plan.

As a result of the different types of rivers and main problems and restoration methods, the river restoration knowhow is polarized to Warsaw (Northern Poland) and Krakow (Southern Poland). The aim of organizing a workshop seminar in Warsaw, hosted by the Warsaw University of Life Sciences, was to get a whole view of RR in Poland and to promote building up a Polish River Restoration Network. The network will be lead from Warsaw, with close contact to the research and other activities in Krakow.

Key outcomes for RESTORE:

A new approach for restoring mountainous rivers has been created especially for Carpathian Mountain Area. The cooperation of different universities and Polish Academy of Sciences has been very fruitful and can serve as a good example in Poland and also for RESTORE. A challenge for the future remains: How to establish interest and responsibility for river restoration among regional water authorities? How to get more skilful practitioners and how can the knowhow be transferred to them? More environmental education? More lectures combining engineering and ecology to universities?

The seminar held in Warsaw pointed out the importance of national river restoration network in Poland. It successfully collected many relevant restoration experts and researchers from Northern Poland together including also Ph.D students from Warsaw University of Life Sciences. Experts from Southern Poland could not attend the meeting, partly due to organizing our field visit, but they were present in the preparatory meeting in February. A good contact between North and South Poland

exists. Some other institutes, like Fishery Research and Technical University of Warsaw could not be present, but key persons sent greetings and promised support for the network.

All the participants, including also professors, agreed that the network is highly needed. Researcher Mateusz Grygoruk was chosen as the coordinator of the network and he was very interested in different actions the network could include in the future. The action and function of the Finnish Watercourse Restoration Network was introduced by Jukka Jormola and Maria Arola with their presentation which received an enthusiastic response from the audience.

Attendance

There were 18 persons from different organisations attending at the Warsaw Seminar. A pre-seminar for this seminar was organized in February 2012 with 20 attendees. The sectors represented were: water managers, river basin planners and practitioners (universities, research institutes and NGO's).

At the field excursion around Krakow there were altogether 12 participants with mostly university background.



Checking the restored site at mountaneous Czarny Dunajec River.

Support for Restoration Practices

The work of the new Polish River Restoration Network should be supported with knowhow from other countries. The conveners of the network should be about the usefulness of cooperating with experts from Southern Poland.

The stakeholders and politicians in Poland should be made aware of the positive effects of environmentally sound river restoration practices.

One large problem remains within the admistration: there are no regional administrators. The River Basin Boards function as the regional water managers. However, the representatives of these River Basin Boards are most often University Professors with main interest and point of view fixed on

engineering and scientific models. Thus they most often lack a holistic approach to the management and restoration of watercourses. The central governance is unable (or unwilling perhaps) to take care of the national and regional watercourse restorations and the local officers lack both knowhow and interest, likely due to unawareness of the potential benefits brought by river restorations.

Building on Network Capacity

The Warsaw Seminar provided an excellent opportunity for river restoration network building in Poland. The participants represented most of the relevant river restoration actors. The atmosphere was very fruitful for meeting people and discussing the different issues in river restoration as well as introducing and promoting RESTORE-project to them.

The field excursion was a good continuation for the seminar. There was only one Polish expert attending the South Poland Field Excursion from Warsaw, but as a PhD student she will take information with her to other network members in Warsaw. Also, the topics discussed in Warsaw interested very much experts from Krakow.

Promoting Effective Knowledge Transfer

The information of the usefulness of a national Watercourse Network, international cooperation between experts, holistic restoration approaches and aims of RESTORE Project were presented to the members of the Polish River Restoration Network at the Warsaw seminar. The presentations by Jukka Jormola and Maria Arola ("Importance of networking in river ecosystem restoration; Lessons learnt from Finland") and Bart Fokkens ("Structure and function of ECRR National Networks") focused especially on these issues.

The same topics were discussed in South Poland Filed Excursion as well. There also the RiverWIKI produced by RESTORE Project was advertised.

Dissemination of Event Outcomes

Articles due to the restoration methods for mountaineous rivers and streams:

Bartłomiej Wyzga, Paweł Oglęcki, Artur Radecki-Pawlik, Tomasz Skalski, Joanna Zawiejska: Hydromorphological complexity as a driver of the diversity of benthic invertebrate communities in the Czarny Dunajec River, Polish Carpathians. *Hydrobiologia*, May 2012.

Bartłomiej Wyzga, Joanna Zawiejska and Milan Lehotsky (eds.) Processes and patterns in highly dynamic mountain fluvial systems. International Field Seminar, 2-4 June 2012, Stará Lesná – Zakopane.

Follow Up

The follow up will be continued via personal contacts and RESTORE web pages. The event was advertised before the event and afterwards a description was written to the RESTORE Newsletter.

Already altogether four experts from both South and North Poland have been pre-registered to the next RESTORE Event organized by the North Region and held in Sweden in Autumn 2012.

Attached lists of participants and the programs of the seminar and of the field excursion.