

Definitions of key terms used by the programme

Biodiversity

The diversity of living species including animals, plants and their habitats.

Dam / small dam

The term 'dam' is used by the programme to refer to any man-made barrier that has been constructed transversely across a river to alter its flow and thus the transport of sediments or the movement of organisms. Examples include dams, weirs, culverts, fords, and sluices. Structures of two metres in height or less are referred to by the programme as small dams.

Fish ladder

A series of ascending pools of running water constructed so that fish may swim upstream, either around or over a dam.

Free-flowing river / open river

The European Commission defines a free-flowing river as a river that is not impaired by man-made barriers and is not disconnected from its floodplain. This means it is largely unaffected by human-made changes to its flow and connectivity. Water, silt, and other natural materials can move freely, and fauna can swim up and downstream at will. The river itself can swell and shrink naturally, flow at an organic volume and rate, and replenish groundwater sources. Free-flowing rivers are not necessarily completely untouched and devoid of human presence – they may support rich livelihoods for communities. They are the freshwater equivalent of wilderness areas.

Good Ecological Status

Under the European Union's (EU) Water Framework Directive, many EU rivers, lakes, wetlands, streams, groundwater, coastal and transitional waters are required to reach good health – defined as "Good Ecological Status" – by 2027 at the very latest. All elements that contribute to a healthy, functioning freshwater ecosystem are considered within this definition, including whether it is biodiversity-rich, and whether its hydrological characteristics and the chemical characteristics are in order.

Riparian

Relating to, living, growing or located on the banks of a stream.

River basin

The area of land from which all surface run-off and spring water flow through a sequence of streams, lakes, and rivers into the sea at a single river mouth, estuary, or delta. It comprises one or more individual catchments.

River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs)

These plans are a requirement of all EU Member States under the EU's water legislation. They outline the plans of a government to achieve its objectives and are an effective tool for achieving the protection, improvement, and sustainable use of freshwater across the EU.

Riverine

Living in, growing in, or located in a river or stream.

River catchment

An area of land where water collects when it rains, often bounded by hills. As the water flows over the landscape it finds its way into streams and down into the soil, eventually feeding the river.

River restoration

The process of managing rivers to reinstate natural processes in order to restore biodiversity.

Waterbody

Under the Water Framework Directive, this is a manageable unit of surface water, being the whole (or part) of a stream, river or canal, lake or reservoir, transitional water (estuary) or stretch of coastal water.

Water quality

The physical (e.g. suspended solids, turbidity, temperature), chemical (eg acidity, dissolved oxygen, pollution) and biological (eg organic matter) characteristics of water.

Watershed

All the land drained by a given river and its tributaries.



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