

# 120-year-old obsolete dam removed in Ukraine to restore rivers in the Carpathian Mountains

*\* First dam removal funded by new European Open Rivers Programme*

*\* WWF aims to restore 3000km of free flowing rivers in Ukraine by 2030*

**Kyiv, 8 August** - Despite the war, critical conservation work continues in Ukraine with a WWF team successfully removing an obsolete dam in the Carpathian mountains, opening the river to migratory fish for the first time in 120 years.

The dismantling of the clogged and abandoned Bayurivka dam this summer has freed 27km of the Perkalaba river close to Ukraine's western border with Romania - and removed the risk of the ancient barrier failing.

Reconnecting the river will allow fish such as endangered Danube salmon, brown trout and Ukrainian brook lamprey to return to their ancient spawning grounds, boosting their populations and supporting the return of predators such as brown bears, European mink and otters - to what could soon become a 'biodiversity hotspot' in the Carpathians.

"This dam removal is a very small step when compared to the huge environmental damage caused by the war but we are still proud that we were able to fulfil our plan and restore this river," said Dr Bohdan Vykhov, CEO of WWF-Ukraine. "By removing obsolete dams across the Carpathian mountains, we are helping to create healthier, more resilient ecosystems that will benefit people and nature long into the future."

Bayurivka was the first dam to be demolished thanks to funding from the European Open Rivers Programme - a game changing €42.5 million initiative to drastically speed up the removal of obsolete dams and weirs across Europe to restore rivers, boost biodiversity and strengthen climate resilience.

"It is extraordinary that the Bayurivka dam is the first barrier to be removed by the programme," said Jack Foxall, Executive Director of the European Open Rivers Programme. "We are inspired by the determination of the WWF Ukraine team who continued with their river restoration activities during these unprecedented times."

WWF has now removed seven obsolete dams in Ukraine since 2020, opening up 530km of river - more than one sixth of the overall goal of 3,000km of restored, free flowing rivers in the country by 2030.

This latest removal in Ukraine shows the growing momentum behind dam removals in Europe. Last year saw a record 239 barriers removed in 17 countries across the continent, including three countries that dismantled their first dams - Montenegro, Portugal and Slovakia.

“Europe’s rivers are littered with 150,000 obsolete dams, weirs and other barriers, which serve no purpose. All they do is disrupt the natural flow of rivers, blocking fish migrations and contributing to the ongoing collapse in freshwater biodiversity,” said Eva Hernandez, WWF Lead, Living European Rivers initiative, which works on dam removals across the continent. “Removing obsolete dams reconnects and restores rivers, boosting biodiversity and building climate resilience.”

The pace has continued this year with the removal of a second huge dam - the 16m Roche qui Boit dam - on the Selune River in France, while the UK has just witnessed the biggest weir removal so far on the River Kent in the Lake District.

The European Open Rivers Programme has so far supported 25 dam removal projects that will be carried out over the next year, while the EU recently published its draft Nature Restoration law, which includes a target of freeing 25,000km of river by 2030.

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#### **Notes to the editor**

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#### **About WWF:**

WWF is an independent conservation organisation, with over 30 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the Earth's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption. Find out more: <https://wwf.ua/en/>

#### **About European Open Rivers Programme:**

The European Open Rivers Programme is a Dutch grant giving foundation funded by Arcadia – a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin. The foundation aims to restore

endangered European rivers by supporting interventions that lead to the removal of small dams and the restoration of river flow and biodiversity. Arcadia supports charities and scholarly institutions that preserve cultural heritage and the environment. Arcadia also supports projects that promote open access, and all of its awards are granted on the condition that any materials produced are made available for free online. Since 2002, Arcadia has awarded more than \$910 million to projects around the world. <https://openrivers.eu/>