



Free Flow Conference Programme

International conference on protecting and restoring free-flowing rivers in Europe

April 15–17, 2024 | Oosterpoort,
Groningen, The Netherlands
Freeflowconference.eu



Welcome to the Free Flow Conference

The World Fish Migration Foundation and Institute of Fisheries Management would like to invite you to the Free Flow Conference taking place on the 15-17 April 2024 in the wonderful city of Groningen in The Netherlands.

Our rivers are facing unprecedented threats, and freshwater biodiversity is in decline, but by joining together to share best practice and learn from each other we may, collectively, be able to slow this decline and restore the free flowing rivers we all hold so dear.

Together with our Advisory Board members we have selected 130 speakers divided over 30 sessions. Topics range from nature based solutions, free flowing river policies, dam removal to technical river connectivity solutions. So, join us and over 450 delegates from around the world for three days of talks, posters, field trips and networking opportunities.

This event is made possible with the support of partners, exhibitors and sponsors. We are truly grateful for their financial contribution.

We look forward to seeing you there.



Herman Wanningen

-

Director World Fish Migration
Foundation



Paul Coulson

-

Director of Operations Institute
of Fisheries Management

Keynote speakers



Pao Fernández Garrido

Dam Removal Expert, World Fish Migration Foundation, Segovia, Spain

“This event gives you the opportunity to meet in-person people from many countries with big experience dealing with river connectivity issues, learning from their real case studies and increasing your network of experts who could collaborate (or give support) in your future projects.”



Zeb Hogan

Research professor, University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada, USA

“Around the world, free-flowing rivers support irreplaceable biodiversity, bountiful fisheries, and human well-being and livelihoods. While these critically important waters are under threat and under appreciated, momentum is building for free-flowing river research, preservation, and restoration. This conference is an opportunity for experts and river advocates to join together to share our knowledge and enthusiasm for healthy rivers full of life, and spread the word about the important connection between people, water, and fish.”



Jeffrey Duda

Research Ecologist, USGS, Western Fisheries Research Center, Seattle, Washington, USA

“More than ever before, the world is focused on the restoration of rivers. I look forward to joining experts from around the world at Free Flow 2024 giving presentations about lessons learned from dam removal and restoration of river connectivity - what it takes, why it is important and what the outcomes can be for rivers, people and biodiversity.”



Gabriel Singer

Ecologist and Research Group Leader, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Berlin, Germany

“To some aquatic fauna, free-flow is a critical life condition. To me as a human, there is hardly anything more inspiring than free-flow, as a real-world phenomenon I study, a conservation target I dream of, a natural riverine feature keeping me alive. So maybe it's a critical life condition for me as well, not just for fish!”





Keynote presentations
are kindly sponsored by:







Programme overview

*The conference programme presented is preliminary. Minor changes in the sessions, titles or order of presenters can be made during the upcoming months. The final programme is scheduled for March 15, 2024.

Monday, 15 April 2024

Time	Programme Overview - Monday 15 April 2024				
7:50 - 8:40	Registration				
8:40 - 8:50	Introduction and welcome				
8:50 - 9:30	Zeb Hogan: Global Swimways and Migratory Megafish: Current Status and Future Opportunities				
9:30 - 10:10	Pao Fernandez Garrido: Progress, challenges and achievements on dam removal in Europe the last 10 years				
10:10 - 10:20	Exhibitors' pitch presentations				
10:20 - 10:40	Break				
10:40 - 12:00	A1 (FREE FLOW ROOM)	B1 (OTTER ROOM)	C1 (STURGEON ROOM)	D1 (DRAGONFLY ROOM)	E1 (KINGFISHER ROOM)
	Implementing European Biodiversity Targets and EU policies for free-flowing rivers	Ecology and hydromorphology of free-flowing rivers	River restoration projects	Conservation of Danube River basin	Cultural and socio-economic aspects of dam removal
12:00 - 12:30	Official opening & VIP guests				
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch time & Exhibitors' market				
	Posters' session - Sponsored by:  Oregon RFID <small>Proudly serving our customers for 20 years</small>				
14:00 - 15:20	A2	B2	C2	D2	E2
	20 years of WFD: What did this bring to free-flowing rivers (+ panel discussion)	Small scale fish passage solutions	River restoration for LIFE (EU LIFE projects)	Hydropower development vs free-flowing rivers	Dam Removal - Small barriers Sponsored by: 
15:20 - 15:50	Break				
15:50 - 17:10	A3	B3	C3	D3	E3
	River restoration tools	Freshwater fish & fisheries: Restoration of migratory fish populations	Nature-based Solutions	River protection in the Western Balkans	Road dams / Culverts retrofitting
17:10 - 18:10	Social Sponsored by:  Gemeente Groningen  Oregon RFID <small>Proudly serving our customers for 20 years</small>				
17:50 - 19:20	DAMBUSTERS FILM SCREENING				

Tuesday, 16 April 2024

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	Dam Removal – Large dams Sponsored by:  McMillen	Cultural and socio-economic aspects of free-flowing rivers	Small scale fish passage solutions	Priority actions towards a free-flowing Rhine and Maas rivers Sponsored by: 	Dam Removal Europe / European Open Rivers Programme workshop
12:00 - 12:30	Official launch of toolkit: How to remove dams?				
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch time				
	FREE FLOW Yoga			Posters' session Sponsored by:	 <small>Proudly serving our customers for 20 years</small>
14:00 - 15:20	A5	B5	C5	D5	E5
	Dam Removal – Small barriers	River restoration for LIFE (EU LIFE projects)	Large scale fish passage solutions	Priority actions towards free-flowing Rhine and Maas rivers Sponsored by: 	BIOGORA workshop: Removing barriers together: Developing a new collaborative strategy for prioritising research to restore free-flowing rivers
15:20 - 15:50	Break				
15:50 - 17:10	A6	B6	C6	D6	E6
	Ecology and hydromorphology of free-flowing rivers	River restoration projects	Freshwater fish & fisheries: Restoration of migratory fish populations	River restoration tools	TBD
17:10 - 18:30	Social & Exhibitors' market				
18:30 - 23:00	Conference dinner & Dam Removal Europe Award ceremony				
	DJ GrooveAX FREE FLOW SET				

Daily Schedules

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10:40	Introduction by LRE	Piotr Parasiewicz: Over 200,000 kilometers of free-flowing river habitat in Europe is altered due to impoundments	Donné Mathijssen: Restoring the Westerwoldse Aa from sea to source: 30 years of improving water quality, connectivity and habitat diversity for fish	Yusdiel Torres-Cambas: Prioritizing conservation and monitoring areas in the Danube River Basin: Insights from the DANUBE4all project	Marq Redeker: People love their weirs – Moving goalposts in a dam removal project
10:55	Wouter van de Bund: Is my river free-flowing? Towards a common European method showing the benefits of barrier removal for river connectivity	Arjit Mishra: Mapping of free flowing and wild rivers of Uttarakhand, India	Ana Catarina Miranda: Rollin' Rivers – People, knowledge and action to enhance river restoration in Portugal	Miroslava Rakovská: Comprehensive efforts towards improvement of the Danube inland delta water regime	Miriam Colls: The adventure of implementing a barrier removal project – A socio-cultural perspective
11:10	Bart Fokkens: River continuity restoration policies and freshwater ecosystem restoration	Róisín Donovan: Invisible actors: Thermal responses to low head impounding structures – Identification, quantification, prioritization, and mitigation	TBD	Marcell Szabo-Meszaros: Connectivity assessment for fish in the Danube River Basin	Clemens Gumpinger: Dam Removal in Austria – How to move from pilot projects to standard procedure?
11:25	Melissa de Raaij: Towards a free(er) flowing Netherlands	Martin Dalvai Ragnoli: How damming contributes to global warming: Learning from the free-flowing Upper Neretva River in Bosnia-Herzegovina	Tim Feierfeil: Structural measures for the near-natural development of the Neckar in Mannheim	Rafaela Schinegger: Riparian zones – A key factor in conservation efforts for terrestrial and freshwater connectivity	Eva Horvat: Best match on Reka catchment: River barrier inventory with awareness raising activities

11:40	Twan Stoffers: Reviving Europe's rivers: Seven challenges in the implementation of the Nature Restoration Law to restore free-flowing rivers	Victoria Huk: The effects of the German-Polish expansion of the Odra River on nutrient retention and water quality	Johanna Hågglund: Ecostreams: Holistic approach to restoring aquatic habitats in Northern Sweden	Anthony Basooma: Biodiversity data quality flagging checks for distribution models using species ecological and tolerance limits	Joshua Matanzima: Dam removal blind spots: Debating the importance of community consultations and consent in decommissioning projects
12:00 – 12:30	Official opening & VIP guests				
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	Posters' session (Sponsored by Oregon RFID)				
	A2	B2	C2	D2	E2
14:00 – 15:20	20 years of WFD: What did this bring to free-flowing rivers (+ panel discussion)	Small scale fish passage solutions	River restoration for LIFE (EU LIFE projects)	Hydropower development vs free-flowing rivers	Dam Removal – Small barriers (sponsored by Princeton Hydro)
14:00	TBD	Olle Calles: Resolving recruitment bottlenecks for the critically endangered European eel	Vibeke Lirås: LIFE CONNECTS creates free flowing rivers in Southern Sweden	Esther Carmen: Navigating change to mainstream barrier removal: Using a Nature-based Solutions (NbS) approach with the hydropower sector across Europe	Geoffrey Goll: Dam removal is not just about dam removal
14:15	Helena Mühlmann: LIFE IP IRIS – Integrated River Solutions in Austria – Linking Water Framework Directive and Floods Directive	Rachel Mawer: Analysing the behaviour of migrating fish to predict movement near barriers	Marc Ordeix: Restoration of fish migration and beginning of a European sturgeon recovery project in the lower Ebre River (Catalonia) and beyond	Peter Rudberg: Stakeholder collaboration as part of the Swedish national plan for modern environmental provisions for hydropower	Kerry Brink: How dam removal has opened up >1817 km of river in Europe
14:30	TBD	Jamie Dodd: Can't pass or won't pass: Quantifying improved connectivity for riverine brown trout at a low-head gauging weir	Sílvia Pedro: LIFE Agueda – Restoring river connectivity for migratory fish in the Vouga River basin	Marcell Szabo-Meszaros: Connectivity assessment for fish in the Danube River Basin	Clemens Gumpinger: Dam Removal in Austria – How to move from pilot projects to standard procedure?
14:45	Panel discussion and Q&A	Patricija Raibarte: Monitoring results show slow recovery of lamprey reproduction after construction of a country wise first natural fish passage	Patrik Olofsson: Reviving freshwater pearl mussel populations and their habitats – LIFE REVIVES	Valerio Barbarossa: Strategic restoration and development scenarios to mitigate fish habitat fragmentation for low-impact hydropower in the Mekong	Camila Kuncar: Improving river governance: Removal of dams on the Ega River
15:00		Samuel Shry: Benefits of dam removal for Atlantic salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) smolt migration and identified challenges in downstream passage of fragmented reaches	Joel Rees-Jones: LIFEDeeRiver, restoring on of the most regulated rivers in Europe	Paul Meulenbroek: Conservation Requirements of European eel (<i>Anquilla anquilla</i>) in a Balkan catchment	Giandomenico Mercuri: Giov & Go: Free-flowing Giovenco. Defragmentation interventions on the Giovenco River: Connecting stakeholders to reconnect the river

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15:50 – 17:10	River restoration tools	Freshwater fish & fisheries: Restoration of migratory fish populations	Nature-based Solutions	River protection in the Western Balkans	Road dams / Culverts retrofitting
15:50	TBD	Justine Gelder: What do fish do during and after the opening of a migration axis? An analysis of their colonization dynamic	Sebastian Birk: Building blocks for upscaling freshwater Nature-based Solutions in Europe	Irma Popovic Dujmovic: Achieving durable river protection: The United for Rivers initiative in Southeast Europe	Erica Borum: A Nature Based Solution at road-stream crossings: Free flowing and flood resilient
16:05	Gonçalo Duarte: RivConnect – A new tool for river network connectivity assessment	Emilien Lasne: A toolbox to assess the spatio-temporal dynamics of Atlantic salmon recolonisation after dam removal on the Sélune River (Normandy, France)	Paul Brotherton: Natural sponges: Wetland solutions to protect against floods and droughts	Rob Cunningham: Mainstreaming NbS in water management sector – Example from Croatia	Emma Washburn: River Obstacles: A new type-attributed road-river crossing dataset for England, United Kingdom
16:20	Liz Townley: Climate driven adaptation tools and strategies for wild and scenic rivers	Johan Watz: Removal of lake outlet dams in Sweden and its effects on fish communities	Péter Kajner: Involving local stakeholders into lateral connectivity restoration along the River Tisza, Hungary	Iskra Krstic: Serbia: A war against rivers and activists	Niklas Kemi: The Swedish transport administrations successful work with removing barriers
16:35	Magnus Keller: Potentials for new free-flowing river sections in Saxony (Germany) – Connecting the Elbe River to its lost tributaries	Heather Bond: The establishment of the Trans-European Swimways Network and Swimways of European Importance	Mario Brillinger: Nature-based solutions for the Elbe estuary?	Maja Pravuljac: Implementation of environmental acquis relevant to hydropower projects in selected Western Balkan countries – Systemic failures and golden standards	Matīss Žagars: Mapping impassable culverts to be removed in the highly ecologically prioritized Gauja River
16:50	Sami Domisch: Tools to address the longitudinal connectivity in spatial freshwater biodiversity science	Sebastian Rock: Parasitic freshwater pearl mussels induce upstream movement in their brown trout hosts: Early evidence of an extended phenotype	Laurice Ereifej: Living Danube Partnership for restoration: 1+1+1=5?, Innovative partnership between corporate, governmental platform and NGO	Jelena Popovic: Komarnica canyon, the screaming silence of untouched nature under threat – The battle for its preservation from hydroelectric power	Thiago Couto: Connecting water and people by improving road-crossing infrastructure in the Brazilian Amazon
17:10 – 18:10	Social (Sponsored by Municipality of Groningen & Oregon RFID)				
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10:40	Morton McMillen: Planning and implementation for the removal of the four dam complex of the lower Klamath project	Herman Wannigen: Dam Removal International. How do we enable dam removal practitioners at scale for saving free flowing rivers around the world	Pieter Boets: Fish migration passages on smaller watercourses: How effective are they?	Tim Vriese: Connectivity on the river Meuse	
10:55	Laura Soissons: Ecological restoration of the Selune River (Normandy, France) through the removal of two large dams	Anna Scaini: Uncovering the invisible connection between people and rivers	Robert Feurich: Improving fish passage by an unstructured block ramp	Jeroen Tummers: Connectivity in the river Meuse: characteristics of a major, flowing bypass	
11:10	TBD	Chris Bowser: Getting everyone involved: A quick primer on building community awareness into conservation action for stream connectivity and dam removal	Arantxa Unzurrunzaga: From theory to practice with naturalized design	TBD	
11:25	Riku Rinnevali: Monitoring the very first large-scale dam removals in Finland – Preliminary results	Brigitta Mikus: Ecosystem services for dam removals in the River Lahn (Germany)	Falko Wagner: Risk assessment for fish passing turbines, pumps and hydraulic structures: A methodological framework and innovative methods	TBD	

11:40	Richard Roos-Collins: Risk management in dam removal	Lígia Vaz de Figueiredo: Can people's engagement facilitate dam removal processes? Lessons learned from a case study in Portugal	David Buysse: An Archimedes screw threesome: A study evaluating the fish friendliness of three Archimedes screw variants	TBD	
12:00 – 12:30	Official launch of toolkit: How to remove dams?				
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch time				
	FREE FLOW Yoga			Posters' session (Sponsored by Oregon RFID)	
14:00 – 15:20	A5	B5	C5	D5	E5
	Dam Removal – Small barriers	River restoration for LIFE (EU LIFE projects)	Large scale fish passage solutions	Priority actions towards free-flowing Rhine and Maas rivers	BIOGORA workshop Removing barriers together: developing a new collaborative strategy for prioritising research to restore free-flowing river
14:00	Kristen Coveleski: Optimizing restoration resources: Removing multiple dams along urban rivers	Katarina Mravcova: LIFE Living rivers: Restoring rivers in Slovakia	Katja Philippart: Fish migration river: Nature based large scale fishway between Waddensea and Lake IJssel. Under construction now! Adaptive design, construction and research ambitions	Melanie Meijer zu Schlochtern: Upstream passage success of large anadromous fish at the Haringvliet estuarine barrier using long-term telemetry monitoring	Removing barriers together: developing a new collaborative strategy for prioritising research to restore free-flowing rivers
14:15	Josu Elso: River connectivity restoration to improve diadromous fish populations: LIFE KANTAUERIBAI project	Sofia Perä: TRIWA LIFE- The Torne River International Watershed LIFE – Europe's largest water project	Mark Yeldham: Severn Unlocked? The response of two anadromous fishes to catchment-scale barrier mitigation in the River Severn revealed using acoustic telemetry	Niels Brevé: Lessons learned from telemetry: How climate change affects pathways of migratory fish in one of Europe's largest river basins	
14:30	Mircea Marginean: First steps in restoring longitudinal connectivity on Vâlsan River – home of critically endangered fish species Asprete	Peter Jones: Overcoming challenges and constraints to delivering effective river restoration: Lessons learnt in the Four Rivers for LIFE project	Vincent Autier: Horizontal fish screen solution for downstream fish passage at a historic dam used to restore Lahontan cutthroat trout population	Bas Roels: Action plan	
14:45	Lorenzo Quaglietta: Galaxes weir removal: an ORP-funded project kickstarting the civic movement for the restoration of river connectivity in Portugal	Karin Olsson: River restoration for a free flowing Rönne å River – Challenges and lessons learned	Reid Swanson: FishPass – A vision for selective fish passage solutions to the connectivity conundrum	Workshop: TBD	
15:00	Melissa Mahavar-Snow: Removing redundant gauging weirs to benefit migratory fish in Wales	TBD	Walter Reckendorfer: Nature-based solutions for fishways		

15:20 – 15:50	Break				
	A6	B6	C6	D6	E6
15:50 – 17:10	Ecology and hydromorphology of free-flowing rivers	River restoration projects	Freshwater fish & fisheries: Restoration of migratory fish populations	River restoration tools	Workshop / Session: TBD
15:50	Carmen Rethschulte: Weir management and the impact on peak floods and sediment flushing as key factors for the upper Isar alluvial dynamics	Ewa Leś: The greatest water management challenges in the Baltic Sea region	Remko Verspui: Spawning migration of North Sea Houting in the Overijsselse Vecht	Mária Šibíková: NaturaSat Wetland project – A novel tool for riparian vegetation monitoring after river branch system restoration	
16:05	Miriam Colls: Green house gas emissions from dammed river basin – A case study at basin scale	Peter Mathisen: Rivers of LIFE – Examples of holistic restorations and problem solving in boreal rivers	Ričards Kaupužs: Successful restoration of migratory fish populations confirms the benefits of dam removal in middlesized rhithral stream	Martin Friedrichs-Manthey: River network properties and spatial connectivity: How and where has the freshwater fish community changed in Germany	
16:20	TBD	Wendy Katagi: Los Angeles river watershed fish passage, restoration, and flows	Stephanie Popp: Mapping sturgeon habitats: A comprehensive overview of sites, protection status and potential threats in selected river systems	Amaia Rodeles: A method for fish meta-population connectivity evaluation and barrier removal optimization	
16:35	Twan Stoffers: Ontogenetic habitat shifts by juvenile fishes highlight the importance of permanent river-floodplain connectivity and habitat heterogeneity	Panos Panagiotopoulos: Restoring a lowland river basin: Effects of fishways, removing barriers and re-meandering on fish and invertebrate communities	Pieterjan Verhelst: European eel migration speed, timing and success in relation to habitats, geographical location and migration barriers: A European-wide telemetry meta-analysis	TBD	
16:50	Tamara Leite: The state of European river network connectivity	TBD	Ian Cowx: Using the global Swimways concept to understand the threats to fish migration in species rich tropical river systems	TBD	
17:10 – 18:30	Social & Exhibitors' market				
18:30 – 23:00	Conference dinner & Dam Removal Europe Award ceremony				
	DJ GrooveAX FREE FLOW SET				

Side Programme

The conference offers a diverse and interesting side programme and networking possibilities. Some highlights are presented here and more can be found on the conference website. If you are interested to host a workshop or a meeting, get in touch with Neza@fishmigration.org to explore the possibilities.

Excursions

To deepen your experience of free-flowing rivers we are offering five field trip options which are organised in cooperation with Wadden Sea Swimway project. You can choose to visit a river restoration and fish passage projects including the fish migration river, something for everyone to explore and experience the region of northern Holland. Visit the website to learn more. Excursions have limited space available and are sold on a first comes, first serves basis.

- **Between Sea and Source: Peizerdiep**
- **Afsluitdijk & Fish migration river**
- **Between Sea and Source Westerwoldse Aa**
- **Texel – Researching fish in the Wadden Sea**
- **Saltmarshes as fish habitat on Schiermonnikoog**



Dambusters Documentary Screening

April 15, 2024 at 17:50, Groningen, The Netherlands

Dambusters documentary follows the journey around the world of Spanish engineer, Pao Fernández Garrido, meeting river heroes on their passionate quest to restore their rivers and ecosystems by removing dams.



Poster Session

The conference will host a poster session where you can present your research too! 20 posters are already selected and there is enough space for 30 more. New poster proposals will be evaluated regularly. Get in touch with Foivos@fishmigration.org for more information.

The poster session is sponsored by:



Swimway Conference 2024

Free Flow Conference synchronised and organised in close cooperation with the [SWIMWAY conference 2024](#) to be held later the same week also in Groningen. Please visit their [website](#) for programme and more information.

Dam Removal Award

Dam Removal Europe proudly presents Dam Removal Award 2023. On the evening of April 16, 2024 will celebrate together free-flowing rivers restored by dam removal projects of 2023 and the jury will announce the winner of the Dam Removal Award 2023. More about the nomination process here: [Dam Removal award](#)

The Dam Removal Award is sponsored by:



Dam Removal Course

April 13-14, 2024, Groningen, The Netherlands

Dam Removal course led by top experts from the field and is targeted to river restoration practitioners near the beginning of their dam removal careers who are looking to remove a dam or two (or more) and are seeking advice and tools with which they could better solve the challenges they might face on the future projects. Two-day course will focus on social and technical aspects of dam removal, including dam removal planning, removal design, and construction techniques, and include an interactive public meeting exercise and interactive case examples where course participants will learn to identify potential projects and key issues.

More information: [Dam Removal Course](#)



Sponsors

The Free Flow Conference is made possible by partners and sponsors. We gratefully thank them for their contributions.



Want to become a sponsor or a vendor too?

Contact: Neza@fishmigration.org