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Dear colleagues,

Winter is approaching, and what an exciting time this is for migratory fish! Dam Removal Europe is excited to share a new round of success stories and event updates, as well as ask for your help with updating the AMBER catalogue. 🌊💙🐟

New Open Rivers Programme (ORP) call

The European Open Rivers Programme (ORP) is pleased to announce a new call for applications open from 13:00 CEST on 19th October 2026, with a submission deadline set for 13:00 CET on 13th November 2026 You can apply via the online portal.

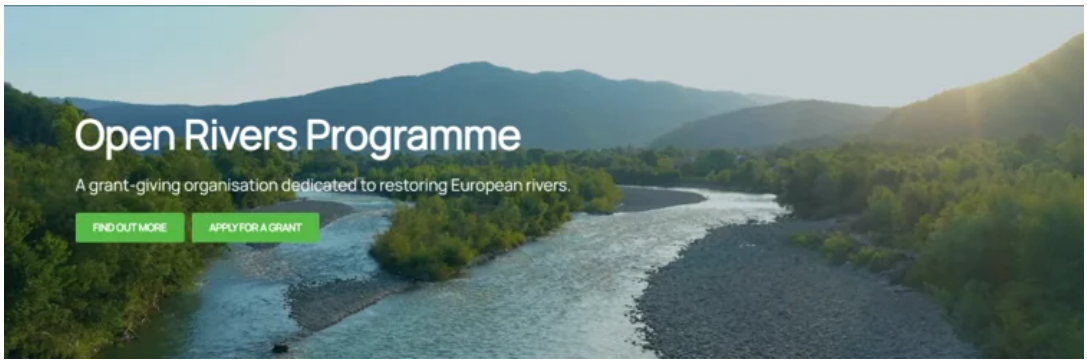
This funding opportunity is ideal for projects dedicated to revitalising Europe's river ecosystems by removing obsolete river barriers. These efforts align with the Programme's mission to restore endangered European rivers by supporting interventions that lead to the removal of small dams and the restoration of river flow and biodiversity.

For full details on how to apply and to browse through the necessary resources, please visit the "Apply for a Grant" page at openrivers.eu. There, you'll find detailed guidelines and helpful materials to guide you in submitting a strong proposal.

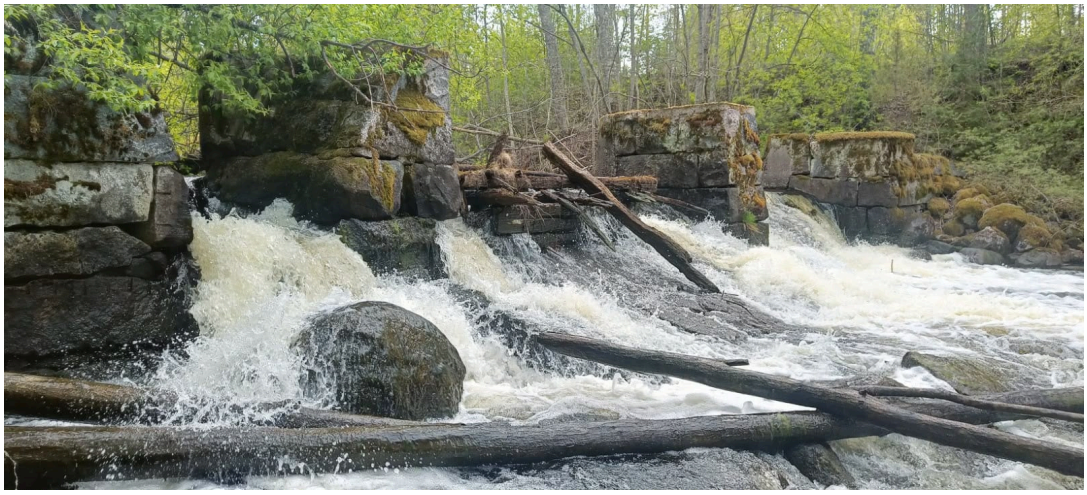
Please note that only A2 (pre-demolition), A3 and A4 (demolition), and B1 (enabling others to remove dams) project applications will be

accepted in this round.

Don’t miss this opportunity to fund your dam removal project. Apply to be part of restoring Europe’s rivers!



Success Story: Finland



Together with various partners, WWF Finland celebrated 80 removed barriers in 7 years, restoring 3000 km of river connectivity. A recent removal happened in Heinola (Kuorekoski), through a collaborative project with the local fishery, state officials, landowners, water rights owners, and private actors.

Currently, there is an ongoing decision-making process regarding the removal of the Palokki hydropower dam, which would open 1523 km upstream and restore 10 whitewater rapids. These translate to the improvement of 42 hectares of salmon and trout reproductive areas, where the dam reservoir is now located.

Along with barrier removal, WWF Finland focuses on restoring the reproductive habitat – for salmonids, that is the white water rapid. Cultural values are also respected by leaving some old structures in place, so that history can still be seen without any negative ecological effect.

View the Virtaankoski underwater live camera feed, showing the comeback of riverine life where a barrier was removed in 2025!

First barrier removed in Romania

Romania officially removed its first barrier! The Aqua Crisius Association carried out the work with the support of the Open Rivers Programme, reopening over 13 km of the upper reaches of the Doamna River to fish.

Before the dam was demolished in late September 2026, a study on the fish population revealed the highest density of trout just below the structure. Fish would reach the obstacle but could not move any further upstream, or struggled to pass (depending on the water flow). "There was longitudinal fragmentation here; migration upstream was no longer possible - only downstream," explained Aqua Crisius' Andrei Togor. He noted that further upstream, along the river and its tributaries, there are suitable spawning grounds.

According to the project organizers, the barrier at Pojarna - located at the foothills of the Făgăraș Mountains - was the final man-made obstruction before the river's headwaters. It blocked fish passage and trapped sediments carried by the water. Aqua Crisius states that species such as the European grayling, the European bullhead, and the brown trout will benefit from the removal of this hydraulic structure.



Read more about the demolition here (page in Romanian)!

Updates from Portugal

The identification of the 17 barriers in the Vascão catchment was carried out under an A1 project funded by the Open Rivers Programme. The project enabled WWF Portugal to assess and prioritise potential removal opportunities across the basin.

Following the recommendation of the Portuguese Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests (ICNF), removal efforts were redirected towards a neighbouring catchment, the Oeiras River. Work in the Oeiras basin culminated with the removal of a weir in Alentejo this past summer, opening up 2,34 km and improving connectivity for endangered freshwater mussel (*Unio tumidiformis*), its host fish species (*Squalius spp.*), and other endangered fish species. This Open Rivers Programme project took 2 years and it was lead by WWF Portugal in collaboration with the National Institute For Biodiversity and Forests.

Restoration activities associated with the Plantar Água projects are ongoing in the Foupana River catchment, which is located close to the Vascão basin. This region is one of the driest areas of Portugal and

faces significant water scarcity and water management challenges during the summer months. Consequently, barrier removal can be a particularly sensitive topic locally, requiring careful engagement with communities and stakeholders and a strong demonstration of the expected environmental benefits.



Abstract submissions are now open for the Scientific Advances for River Restoration (SARR) 2027 conference!

SARR is an international forum for scientists, researchers and practitioners committed to advancing knowledge and practice in river and floodplain system restoration, meeting for the second time 1–3 September 2027 in Liverpool.

Abstracts are welcome that present scientific research relevant to river restoration, including fundamental science, applied case studies, innovative methods, monitoring approaches, policy developments, and interdisciplinary collaborations. Suggested topics include:

- Biology
- Ecology

- Hydromorphology
- Ecosystem functioning
- Socioecology
- Policy
- Economics

The deadline for abstract submissions is **31 December 2026**. The abstract submission guidelines for SARR 2027, including character limits, are included at the top of the submission form.

Exceptional abstracts may be suggested for development into a paper for publication in a **Special Issue** with a peer-reviewed journal.

AMBER data collection

Help us find the missing barriers!

Blue Rivers Foundation is updating the **AMBER Atlas** to build the most complete and accurate picture of barriers fragmenting Europe's rivers, and we need your help to fill the data gaps:

- **Share your barrier datasets**, or tell us where they're published (any format is welcome), at info@blueriversfoundation.org

- **Record barriers in the field** with the new AMBER Barrier Tracker app, now available on iOS and Android!



Explore the barrier map & download the app!

ROI analysis for dam removal projects webinar

The Nature Conservancy's Appalachians Free Rivers Accelerator program presented a Return on Investment (ROI) Analysis for Dam Removal Projects webinar in September. The session covered how to

effectively estimate and link the long-term costs of continued ownership of a dam versus dam removal. The presentation covered key economic principles to help dam removal project managers communicate the potential economic benefits of dam removal to owners and the community.

The session included an introduction to ROI analysis, the resources and information needed to conduct the analysis, a walkthrough of TNC's ROI intake form submission and ideas for presenting ROI findings to a dam owner. Participants gained practical insights helpful in the decision-making process for private owners, local governments, and other dam owners from viewing the webinar recording.

Interested in a future webinar? Please contact ian.luby@tnc.org.

Watch a recording of the webinar!

Removing every barrier advances healthier rivers, increases biodiversity, and fosters stronger communities. As river restoration gains momentum throughout Europe, we are thrilled to witness new projects, partnerships, and opportunities arising within the network.

Thank you for joining us on this journey! Together, we are enabling rivers to flow freely once more.

The Dam Removal Europe Team

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