



WWF

BRIEF

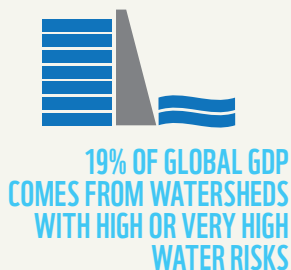
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2019

# FRESHWATER INITIATIVES

## THE STORY OF WATER IS THE MOST IMPORTANT STORY OF ALL.

Without it, there would be no life. It fuels our farms, sustains our rural communities and mega cities, and underpins our economies. But water does not come from a tap. Ultimately, people and nature rely on healthy rivers.



83% DECLINE IN FRESHWATER SPECIES IN THE LAST 40 YEARS

But the world's rivers are under increasing pressure. They are being dammed, drained and dredged at unprecedented rates. Many of the diverse benefits they provide – freshwater fisheries, flood protection and sediment to keep deltas above sea level – remain undervalued and overlooked. And are rapidly being lost. Population growth, urbanisation and climate change are only going to increase the demands and exacerbate the risks.

With our new global strategy and range of innovative initiatives, WWF's Freshwater Practice is transforming the way we tackle these threats. The scope, scale and ambition of our work is undergoing a paradigm shift. Our focus is on big wins – on securing systemic and landscape level change. We are integrating our efforts with the other Practices and building broad coalitions of new and existing partners to pursue holistic solutions for our river basins.

Water is central to everything. By protecting and restoring our rivers and wetlands, we will play a critical role in bending the biodiversity curve. By safeguarding the diverse benefits of healthy rivers, we will clearly demonstrate the value of nature to people, inspiring new donors and supporters. By transforming the management of freshwater ecosystems, we will build resilience to climate change, which will impact people first and foremost through water.

## RESILIENT ASIAN DELTAS:

Stopping the continent's deltas from sinking and shrinking

Asia's great deltas – the Indus, Ganges-Brahmaputra, Irrawaddy, Mekong, Pearl and Yangtze – are home to hundreds of millions of people, productive agricultural land, industries that drive much of the global economy, and rich biodiversity. But they are all sinking and shrinking because dams and sand mining have drastically reduced the flow of sediment, which is all that can keep the deltas above the rising seas. WWF's initiative will build resilience through a multipronged approach, including redirecting billions of dollars into bankable water projects, promoting nature-based solutions, pioneering effective sediment management and promoting system-wide renewable energy planning.

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## ICONIC FREE FLOWING RIVERS:

Protecting crucial rivers around the world from new dam development

The world's iconic free flowing rivers provide critical benefits to people and nature, but they are under threat from a wave of new dams. With its new coordinated global approach, WWF will use an unprecedented mix of science, technology, policy and public campaigns to keep these rivers free flowing. WWF will focus its efforts on 9 iconic river systems that are highly threatened by new dam development, contain high levels of freshwater biodiversity and provide diverse benefits for communities, before replicating success elsewhere. This will include: the Amazon, Balkans, Eastern Himalayas, Irrawaddy and Salween, Luangwa, Mekong, Okavango/KAZA, Pantanal, and Rufiji.

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## ASIAN FLYWAYS:

Saving migratory birds, building resilience to climate change

Widespread habitat loss threatens the future of Asia-Pacific's extraordinary bird migrations, with species under increasing pressure from Russia to New Zealand. The habitats necessary for bird migration also provide critical ecosystem services for people and nature. WWF and partners are protecting and restoring wetlands, monitoring iconic birds, building transformational corporate partnerships, and mobilizing millions of people across the East Asian-Australasian and Central Asian Flyways. This will be the first network of its kind across Bhutan, China, India, Japan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, South Korea, South East Asia, and the Pacific. Healthy wetlands will provide vital stepping stones for migratory birds and build climate resilience for communities.

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Trillions of dollars are needed to secure water for all, but traditional investments could wreck our rivers. WWF's Bankable Water Solutions are helping to solve this dilemma. Around the world, WWF is using its expertise, network, and trusted relationships to provide investors with a pipeline of sustainable projects that benefit river basins and provide an acceptable return on investment. WWF is establishing a seed fund to develop successful projects and create an enabling environment for investors. This includes industrial and agricultural efficiency projects, water treatment and water supply, ecosystem restoration, and alternative energy solutions to large hydropower.

## BANKABLE WATER SOLUTIONS:

Banking on financial solutions to save our basins

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## RIVER DOLPHINS:

Saving these iconic species from the Amazon to the Yangtze

River dolphins live in some of the world's greatest rivers – Amazon, Ganges, Indus, Mekong, Irrawaddy, and Yangtze. But most species are in danger of extinction. WWF is the only conservation NGO working on all 5 species and our efforts have helped increase dolphin populations in the Indus and Mekong. However, the scale of the threats from new dams, pollution and bycatch requires a more ambitious approach. Launching the first global river dolphin strategy, WWF will generate political momentum, expand protected areas and sustainable fishing, transform business practices, and redirect investments into sustainable infrastructure.

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## WATER RESERVES:

Spreading Mexico's success across the LAC region

As water stress increases due to growing demand and poor governance, WWF is working with governments to transform water management by establishing water reserves. Water reserves ensure sufficient water for the environment, biodiversity and healthy functioning of each river, while also providing water for families, farms and firms. WWF's initiative has already led to the historic creation of 300 water reserves in Mexico, safeguarding water supplies for 45 million people for 50 years as well as protecting the country's last free flowing rivers. With development partners, WWF aims to replicate this success across Central and South America.

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## BLUE HEART OF AFRICA:

Keeping the continent's lifeblood flowing

With demand for water and pressure on Africa's rivers set to rise dramatically, WWF's ground-breaking Africa-wide approach will safeguard the critical water sources, protect the flows, and secure the freshwater fisheries of Africa's major rivers, while promoting sustainable infrastructure development. Our goal is to catalyze new partnerships and transform the way communities, youth and decision makers value rivers to secure resilient water sources in the Blue Heart of Africa, improving food, energy and water security for the region.

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## STURGEON:

Saving the most endangered species group on Earth

Sturgeon have been around since the age of the dinosaurs, but are now on the brink of extinction due to overfishing, a flourishing illegal caviar trade, habitat loss, and a wave of new hydropower dams. But we can still save sturgeon, and in the process revive rivers and control illegal wildlife trade in Russia, the Danube, Asia, and North America. WWF is the only conservation organization currently working to save sturgeon in a coordinated way. With our diverse range of partners and an approach including wildlife trade, river planning and protection, illegal fishing prevention, and livelihoods, WWF is seeing success that can be replicated with greater support.

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The Pantanal is the largest tropical wetland in the world, boasting 4,000 species and providing irreplaceable ecosystem services valued at US\$112 billion per year. However, deforestation and new hydropower dams are threatening its future. In 2018, Bolivia, Brazil, and Paraguay signed a landmark deal to jointly manage and sustainably develop this extraordinary area. WWF will capitalize on this political momentum to pursue our ambitious agenda: promoting sustainable land use, launching bankable water solutions, stopping unsustainable infrastructure projects, expanding protected areas, and improving the public sector's capacity to manage resources.

## PANTANAL:

Transforming political promises into effective protection

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## LIVING EUROPEAN RIVERS:

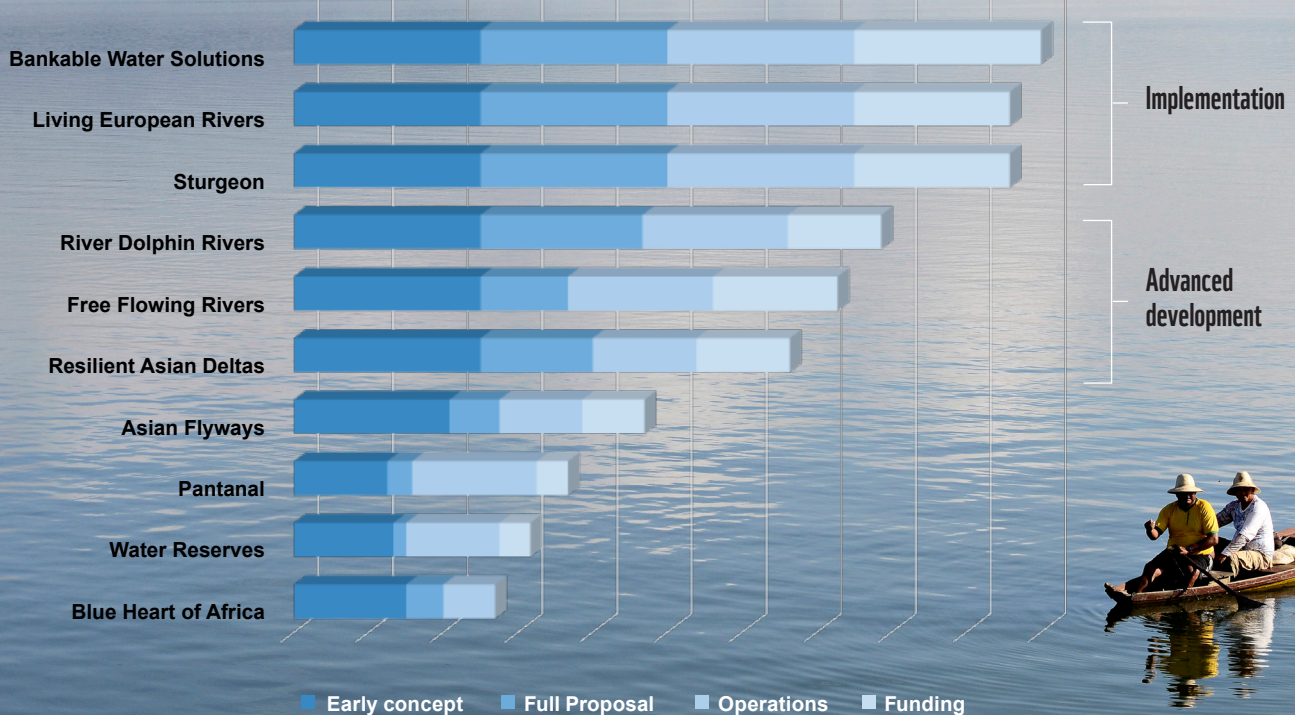
Bringing life back to the continent's waterways

European rivers provide fond holiday memories and support the continent's economies with water, food, transport and power. But only 40% are in a good ecological state due to dams, pollution, shipping and over-extraction. WWF is working across Europe – from Spain to the Caucasus – to protect the continent's remaining free flowing rivers, restore floodplains and wetlands, and remove obsolete dams, while inspiring millions to defend the laws that protect their rivers, lakes and wetlands. With our partners, we are aiming for a paradigm shift in river management, which will bring back biodiversity and enhance climate resilience and water security.

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# Global Freshwater Initiatives 2018

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## WWF & FRESHWATER WHY IT WORKS

### PRACTICE LEADERSHIP

- **Stuart Orr**  
Practice Lead,  
Freshwater
- **Philip Leonard**  
Deputy Practice Lead,  
Freshwater

### Leading Expertise

- Unparalleled experience in freshwater conservation, policy, planning, and data that allows us to scale success
- A pioneer in freshwater finance and stewardship
- Long-term country presence and an unmatched global network
- Constant drive for innovation to unleash disruptive change
- Design of holistic and integrated approaches for lasting impact

### A Trusted Brand & Powerful Convenor

- An influential partner and central convenor of public and private sector, civil society, and academia
- A leading source on water risk
- Uniquely placed to catalyse sustainable water investments
- Driving freshwater thought leadership and knowledge exchange
- Ability to mobilize millions of citizens and empower communities worldwide

### Initiative Impact

- Nearly 300 Water Reserves created in Mexico, safeguarding water for 45 million people & environment
- River dolphin populations rising in Indus & Mekong
- Bankable projects underway in Africa, Asia & Europe
- EU states endorse urgent sturgeon action plan
- Zambia cancels hydropower dam on Luangwa river



#### Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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