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| Project title | Gravel structures and linkage of old tributaries within the scope of the LIFE Nature Project Wachau |
| Content of the project | Creation of gravel structures such as flat embankments or islands in the main river between Melk and Krems and the linkage of old tributaries in the area of river meadows in the Wachau |
| Client | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LIFE Nature Project funded by the EU for the preservation and improvement of the European network of protected areas Natura 2000 |
| Financing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> via donau - Österreichische Wasserstraßen-Gesellschaft mbH Land government of Lower Austria (Lower Austrian Landscape Fund) (NÖ Landschaftsfonds) Lower Austrian Fishery Association (Landesfischereiverband) Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Environment and Water Management Arbeitskreis Wachau - Regionalentwicklung |
| Partners/Planners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HYDRO INGENIEURE Umwelttechnik GmbH ezb Eberstaller Zauner Büros, Technisches Büro Dr. Gerald Zauner freiwasser, Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Ökologie, Kulturtechnik und Wasserwirtschaft, Dipl.-Ing. Thomas Bauer, Dipl.-Ing. Dr. Thomas Kaufmann |
| Project volume: | EUR 5,255,000 (incl. VAT); via donau's share is EUR 1,242,000 |
| Start and term | 2003 – 2008 |
| Section | Wachau, Donau – river km 2035 - 2004 |
| Project description | <p>One of the main features of this project is the linkage of the silted-up remains of old tributaries (ponds) in Rossatz-Rührsdorf (Pritzenau, Venedigerau), in Aggsbach Dorf and in Grimsing.</p> <p>The largest sub-project is the linkage of the waters in Rossatz-Rührsdorf, where under the leadership of via donau a total of over 3 km of new river branches of the Danube have been created. In the spring of 2006, two bridges were completed and the large-scale excavating works with the creation of two generous inflow openings at Rührsdorf were largely completed. Ever since, the Danube has flowed through Venedigerau and Pritzenau throughout the entire year. Fishing in the summer of 2006 revealed that in the reactivated branches excellent habitats for Danube fish species have developed especially for young fish that like strong currents. The construction work was continued in the autumn of 2006 with the formation of the inflow openings and the linkage of the ponds near Rossatzbach. Projected completion date: Spring 2007.</p> <p>Structuring the main river of the Danube by creating gravel structures is another aim of the LIFE Nature Project. Within the scope of the subproject "Embankment Structuring Wachau", via donau creates new gravel embankments, broken stone embankments</p> |

and islands from the broken stones dredged from the new navigation line. The material remains in the flowing water system of the Wachau and is not removed but reintegrated in an ecologically sensible manner. This creates new shallow egg-laying areas for the fish of the Danube protected from waves. Up to now, broken stone islands and riverbanks were created in 10 areas. The first ecological investigation of fish has already revealed a higher number of young fish. The LIFE Nature Projects Wachau aims to shift some 400,000 m³ of broken stone in 14 areas between Melk and Mautern. The main priority of the broken stone islands is to improve the ecological composition of the waters, even though they do also serve to enhance the landscape and raise the recreational value of the Danube riverbanks.

As the LIFE Nature Project Wachau also covers work to improve the ecology of the flowing water systems as well as dry fields and forests, a comprehensive approach is taken here for the preservation and improvement of the Natura 2000 area Wachau. This comprehensive project consists of the following modules:

- Gravel structures Danube – Embankment Structuring Wachau (Donau main river)
- Reactivation of side waters (connection of old arms)
- Dry fields management (e.g. through innovative pasturing projects)
- Maintenance / improvement of FFH-relevant forests
- Creation of a Nature Protection Coordination Body Wachau

The results will be evaluated within the scope of monitoring. For example, representative gravel structures will be examined as to their use by young fish; especially FFH – species. The newly created habitats in the newly linked old arm systems will be examined as to their suitability and how young fish live there over the seasons. Attention will be paid to the typical fish species of the Danube (Chondrostoma nasus, Barbus barbus) and to the endangered FFH types.

For further information on the LIFE Nature Project Wachau: www.life-wachau.at

The role of via donau: via donau - Österreichische Wasserstraßen-Gesellschaft mbH participates in the national share of the LIFE Nature Project with an amount of EUR 1,242,000

via donau is responsible for structuring the main river, the lead management of the linkage of the old river branch Rührsdorf-Rossatz, and expert support for the old river branch projects Grimsing and Aggsbach Dorf.

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