

Ship navigation and natural treasures- conflicts and focal points -CROATIA

In Croatia there are several navigable rivers (most of them partly), they are Kupa, Drava, Sava and Danube itself. Only Danube is navigable in whole reach, about 137.5 km, and is available for bigger ships, till 1500 t.

Status of navigable paths and river fleet are not satisfactory and are neglected in last 20 years. Before the Homeland war the paths were not done according the needs and EU standards, and during the War lot of damage has been done, as all of these rivers are in border areas severely affected by War, and in that time all transport was stopped.

Since then not a lot has been done, and EU standards has not been reached. All our harbors should be equipped with facilities for disposing of polluters, as international conventions are recommending. We see not existence of system for managing of wastewaters from the ships and transport of hazardous goods as a major threat for water quality of Danube Basin rivers in Croatia.

We can be happy, from environmental point of view that in Croatia river transport was never well developed, so riverbanks stayed in natural state, and no major river regulation works were done.

Only some river stabilization works have been done during the '70, but mainly because of flooding and "instability" of riverbed that is causing soil erosion and potential danger for local inhabitants and agricultural infrastructure.

Not to picture be so nice, there is developed one big project "Multifunctional channel Danube - Sava". This gigantic channel is planned for long time, but, fortunately, is not built yet, mainly because of the finances, mine fields and lack of political will.

The Channel will cause major landscape changes, will lead to devastating changes of subterranean water level and cause drying out of floodplain forest that are traditional treasure, vital for local economy (forestry) and wildlife of Eastern Slavonia region.