

Why is nature restoration needed?

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a number of land drainage activities were undertaken by the tsarist administration in the Biebrza River Valley in order to drain the area. The activities were supposed to improve both the agricultural use of land and economic situation of local people. It is at this time that the Woźnawiejski Canal, incorporating water from the Jegrznia River, and the Rudzki Canal, fed by the Elk River in Modzelówka, were built in the Middle Basin of the Biebrza Valley. As a result of re-digging the Woźnawiejski Canal, the so called "Triangle" was formed between the Woźnawiejski Canal, the Jegrznia River, and the "Dead" Elk River.

In consequence, the outflow of water has become faster and the level of groundwater lower. This has led to negative changes in habitats, including the cessation of peat formation and, in many places, the disappearance of organic soil. Habitat deterioration has also negatively affected the diversity of flora and fauna.

Today, we can observe the negative effects of drainage activities on agriculture, e.g. the draining function of the Rudzki Canal has caused in many locations such a drastic decline in the conditions of agricultural production that the areas in the vicinity of this canal require irrigation. In recent years, periodic droughts have also become more frequent. Although "wet" years still occur, the said area is generally getting drier, which might result in a permanent loss of its current properties and value.

In order to prevent this, the Biebrza National Park has begun to implement the project called "Restoration of hydrological system in the Middle Basin of the Biebrza Valley. Phase I.", co-financed by the European Union under the LIFE programme and the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management in Warsaw. It is one of the first such huge-scale projects of nature restoration implemented in Poland and one of the most important ones in Europe.

What is the aim of the project?

The aim of the project is to improve the conditions for the protection of water habitats in the Middle Basin of the Biebrza Valley by:

- » controlled management and irrigation of the area in order to stop the degradation processes of hydrogenic habitats within the water system of the Rudzki Canal – the Elk River – the Jegrznia River – the Woźnawiejski Canal;
- » creating habitat conditions for avifauna of open marshlands



Elk river

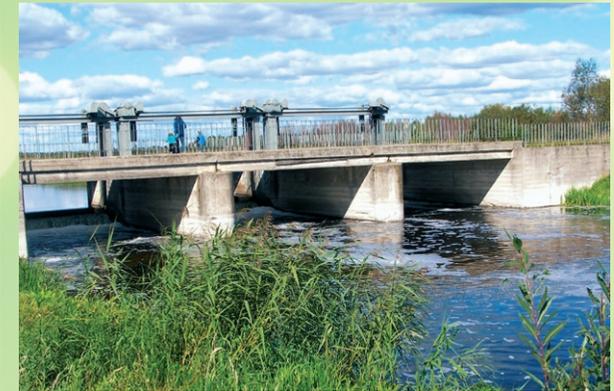


Project area

What will be done under the project?

Under the project:

- » technical and project documentation will be drawn up regarding among other things the rebuilding of the water junction in Modzelówka and clearing of the Elk River bed in the subsequent stage of the Restoration Project;
- » bars and weir will be built on the Woźnawiejski Canal;
- » the bridge over the Jegrznia River in Kuligi will be renovated;
- » the Jegrznia river-bed will be cleared;
- » wildlife inventory will be prepared along with digital elevation models and a conservation plan for the area;
- » land purchases will be made and debushing will be carried out



Weir in Modzelówka

Who will benefit?

Despite numerous negative changes, the area is still characterised by its outstanding natural values and has been entirely included in the Natura 2000 network of protected areas as SPA „Ostoja Biebrzańska” (The Biebrza Refuge) and SAC „Dolina Biebrzy” (The Biebrza Valley). There are as many as six types of habitats in the area that are mentioned in the EC Habitats Directive. Numerous rare species of birds, endangered both in Poland and Europe, have been found here, including over twenty species listed in Annex I to the Birds Directive, e.g. Greater Spotted Eagle, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Short-toad Eagle, Black Grouse, Corncrake, Eurasian Curlew, Great Snipe, Eurasian Eagle-owl, White-backed Woodpecker, Aquatic Warbler, Bluethroat, Great Bittern, Short-eared Owl. The area covered by the project is also a refuge of moose and wolf and a home to a large beaver population. We trust that the implantation of the project will enable us to preserve this rich natural world or even improve the current situation. Local community will also benefit. Thanks to water constructions build under the project, it will be possible, particularly in the dry years, to manage water supplies in an appropriate way so as to retain as much water as possible within the area and in this way support nature friendly agriculture.



Black Grouse

Where is the project implemented?



Map with the project area

Contact Information:

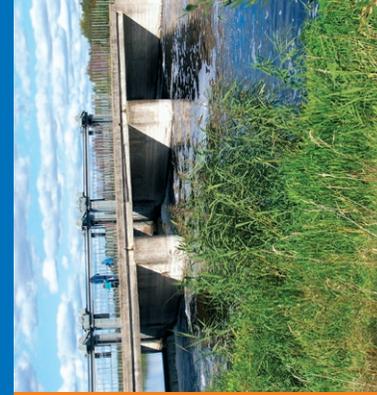
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“Restoration of hydrological system in the Middle Basin of the Biebrza Valley. Phase I.”

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Foto: GiT.Kłosowscy, A.Wiatr, M.Silakowski



RESTORATION

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