

The world's biggest river health initiative? Insights on large-scale ecosystem restoration, water security and resilience from the Yangtze River, China

Host : WWF *, GIWP

Presenters

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Description

Body

1) Short Description

In a world of rapidly increasing water security and resilience challenges, and dramatically declining freshwater biodiversity, why should we care about river health? This session will share experience from 20 years of efforts to tackle problems affecting the health of Asia's longest river, the Yangtze. As well as telling the story of conservation and strategic water management initiatives in the Yangtze itself, the session will focus on lessons for improving river health across Asia and the rest of the world to achieve strategic policy objectives.

2) Objectives

To promote restoration of river health as a means of achieving water security and resilience goals, and to aid recovery of freshwater biodiversity; and to share lessons on strategic water management approaches that safeguard and improve river health.

3) Justifications

The social and economic problems presented by failing river health are widespread and profound. Demographic, economic and climate changes mean that stresses on rivers and water resources are intensifying. At the same time pollution, a management of land and water resources have had profound effects on freshwater biodiversity, which is now declining at twice the rate of biodiversity in forests or oceans. Conventional approaches to managing these stresses are becoming ever more challenging in the face of intensifying pressures, and there have been increasing calls for investing in nature-based solutions, such as restoration of river health, as well as engineering solutions. Strategic water management approaches, along with tools such as river health scorecards and systematic freshwater conservation planning, can help guide such investments. There is an urgent need for guidance and case studies of how to deploy these tools and approaches in practices, especially in large river basins.

4) Projected outcomes

Improved awareness of river health and strategic water management concepts, approaches and tools; ii) Uptake of lessons from experience using concepts, approaches and tools to improve river health in the Yangtze basin, and feedback from experts on future river health efforts in China; and iii) Insights for policy makers, researchers and practitioners on how to deploy these concepts, approaches and tools in large-scale river basins globally.

5) Alignment with Congress

Theme D – Securing healthy waters, catchments and ecosystems