



freshwater

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VISION

Secure freshwater for people and nature.

PRIORITIES

1. Release the world's first global registry of free-flowing rivers and promote monitoring of river connectivity, protection of critical rivers, and more sustainable infrastructure development (see below).
2. Secure water in the face of a changing climate through legal protections of water reserves.

SIGNATURE PROJECT: Free Flowing Rivers

Even though populations of freshwater species are declining faster than those of terrestrial or marine species, not enough is being done to protect their wild habitats. In response, WWF is turning our attention to free-flowing rivers, the freshwater equivalent of wilderness areas. They are considered even more rare and imperiled than their terrestrial or marine counterparts, yet there is no global consensus on the definition or status of free-flowing rivers, nor any global registry identifying where free-flowing rivers remain. No road map currently exists to provide important information on the location of these connected rivers. These gaps present challenges to monitoring the status of free-flowing rivers over time, and makes it difficult to secure the future of healthy freshwater systems.

The free-flowing rivers initiative is a multi-office effort to ensure biological connectivity and freshwater flows in the world's rivers. This includes a first-of-its-kind global scientific assessment that defines and identifies the world's free-flowing rivers, resulting in an indicator that can be used to track river connectivity in the future. The process followed to identify the world's free-flowing rivers can also be used within regions, countries, or basins with better data to inform development planning that will impact river connectivity. The science is being released with a coordinated communications push to promote free-flowing rivers—by celebrating successful protection schemes, advocating against dams that will disrupt critical free-flowing rivers, and reconnecting rivers by removing infrastructure. Ultimately, we will help the world's governments create, increase, and enforce protections for important free-flowing rivers, and, where necessary, remove outdated infrastructure to reconnect key river systems.