

Although the Municipality of Raska issued a construction permit for the construction of this SHPP in October 2018, CINS reveals that the investor did not collect all the necessary documentation for that.

The construction of the mini hydroelectric power plant Tosovici near Raska has started, although the investor has not received the necessary conditions for nature protection, CINS reveals. Without these conditions, the construction permit should not have been issued, so this small hydroelectric power plant is being built illegally, believes Ljubica Vukcevic from the environmental NGO RERI.

On May 1, Rade Pavlovic went to his native village of Kovaci, near Raska, to spend the holidays there with his family. They went to the bank of the small, fast, mountainous river Planska, where the land owned by his father is located. He had not been to that place for years before this visit, and as he told the Center for Investigative Journalism of Serbia (CINS), he was upset by what he found there.

“I saw fresh traces on the road and a sign from a surveyor. I knew that a mini hydroelectric power plant would definitely be built there, regardless of the fact that investors told a story in the village about how they gave up on building,” says Pavlovic.

Later that month, on the Planska river, next to Pavlovic’s father’s plot, the construction site of the mini hydroelectric power plant (MHE) Tosovici sprang up. The investor of this SHPP is the company Meckari, owned by Milinko Milojevic.

Through private meadows and forests, the wheels of machinery and cars formed a dirt road to the construction site, and it is planned that the part of the river that flows there will be placed in a pipe. One of the plots at that place belongs to Pavlovic’s family, and he says that the investor did not ask them for consent to go through their property:

“They brought an excavator, machinery, mixers, they started digging, they started making a water intake, they blocked the river. A total destruction of nature has begun.”

Milojevic does not have the so-called nature protection conditions of the Institute for Nature Protection of Serbia, necessary for the construction of SHPPs. Based on them, investors ask the municipality, on whose territory they want to build, for location conditions, and then a building permit.

As confirmed for CINS by the Institute for Nature Protection, SHPP Tosovici does not have the conditions for nature protection.

Lawyer Ljubica Vukcevic from the Regulatory Institute for Renewable Energy and the Environment (RERI) says that the law was violated in this case, considering that the conditions for nature protection are necessary.

“They must exist, they must appear in the documentation, they must be visible whether in

the location (conditions, new note), or in the construction permit. So, essentially, when there are no conditions for nature protection, it is illegal in the very procedure of issuing location conditions, and then building permits, “says Vukcevic.

The head of the department for urbanism of the municipal administration of Raska, Branko Kostic, who signed the building permit for the construction of this SHPP, says for CINS that no conditions were needed for that because the facility was not positioned in a zone under any protection.

“Its estimated power is 100 kw, which means that it belongs to the group of small or micro hydro power plants, because according to the Law on Environmental Impact Assessment, the planned power plant is not on the list of projects for which environmental impact assessment is mandatory (text formatted by a journalist) “, It is written in Kostic’s answer to CINS’s questions. However, Vukcevic says that these are two different issues because the environmental impact assessment is a separate procedure in relation to the conditions of nature protection that are necessary during the construction of all mini hydro power plants. Investor Milinko Milojevic did not want to talk to CINS.

### **Protests and counter-protests**

Dissatisfied locals of the village have organized two protests so far, at which they said that they do not want a mini hydroelectric power plant in their village. CINS journalists were at the last protest, on Saturday, June 19.

“Primarily, we protest because they are destroying nature with this, they are destroying the river. They plan to implement the entire river in a pipe, all the living world in the river dies, the trees around the river are drying up “, says Rade Pavlovic.

He adds that along the river there are raspberries and agricultural plots of the locals:

“With the disappearance of the river, these people will be forced to move out of this area because they will have nothing to water the little ones, and for some it is the only source of income.”

During the first protest, on May 30, a counter-protest was held. As H1 reported at the time, among those who advocated the construction of SHPPs was the son of the SHPP investor Tosovici, Stefan Milojevic, who said that the state would not allow them to build if it were not allowed.

“They would not get a building permit for the project. As far as paperwork is concerned, everything is legal and if there are any problems with the locals, we will solve them in court, “Stefan Milojevic told N1 at the time.

This is not the only SHPP owned by the company Meckari, ie Milinko Milojevic. He already

owns SHPP Klupci in the municipality of Raska, on the Gobeljska river, about which CINS has already written. This small hydroelectric power plant did not have the conditions for environmental protection either. Despite the fact that it was built without the necessary documentation, it works and the state buys electricity from it. We remind you that the state buys electricity produced from renewable energy sources, which includes the operation of SHPPs, at higher prices in order to encourage investments in that business. From 2013 to the end of 2020, SHPP Klupci sold electricity worth 19.8 million dinars to the state. Despite the fact that SHPP Klupci did not have the conditions of nature protection during construction, the Institute for Nature Protection in 2019 issued them the conditions of nature protection for the preparation of the Urban Project for reconstruction and construction. It is about the reconstruction of the water intake, the construction of a new pipeline and a new machine building and SHPP. The Institute then issued a positive opinion on these conditions. It is no exception that SHPPs in Serbia do not have the necessary conditions for nature protection, according to a BIRN survey. Namely, out of 116 small hydro power plants that were privileged producers of electricity in 2019, at least 24 were built without nature protection conditions.

Source: cins.rs