

Campaigners in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton launched a petition against the construction of two small hydro-power plants on the river Buna, claiming they would cause environmental damage.

Environmental campaigners the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton in the Mostar region have launched a petition calling on the tourism and environment ministry in the Federation, one of the country's two political entities, to prevent the building of the hydro-power plants. "This is a region which has an incredible environmental value," Rijad Durkic, one of the activists behind the campaign entitled Stop the Construction of Mini Hydro-Power Plants on the Buna, told BIRN on Monday.

The campaigners argue that in the Yugoslav era, the territory where the two plants are to be built was protected by law, and they believe that it could be better used to develop the local tourist sector.

"These two plants will produce only a very minor quantity of electricity and will therefore have a small economic impact," Durkic said.

"On the other hand, our government will destroy forever one of the most beautiful parts of our country, which could be better exploited to develop our touristic potential," Durkic said. Their online petition had attracted around 550 signatures by 4pm local time on Monday.

In 2014, the government of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton decided to approve a concession for the construction of the two small plants, Buna 1 and Buna 2, which will produce 5MW of electricity each.

The cantonal government has defended the project, claiming that 10 million KM [around five million euros] has already been invested and that the two plants will not have any major impact on the local environment.

"We're not talking about big accumulation plants, but rather about small plants which won't have any impact on the water ecosystem of the Buna," Donko Jovic, the Minister for Agriculture, Forests and Water Management of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, told Radio Free Europe's Balkan service.

According to Bosnian media, the construction works is set to start in June.

The project is part of a wider plan to build hydro-power plants in the canton. The local government has already approved 36 concessions, according to Al Jazeera Balkans.

source: balkaninsight.com