

Croatia: Hidroenergetska Postrojenja company withdrawals from using the Krupa river for hydroelectric purposes

The Hidroenergetska Postrojenja company has informed the Environment and Energy Ministry of its withdrawal from the assessment procedure on the need for an environmental impact study for a small hydroelectric dam on Krupa river. This means the investor has de facto given up on the project, welcomed by many Croatian environmental protection associations.

Experts from the BIOM, Eko Pan, HDZPP and WWF associations sent in their strong objections last September to using the Krupa river to hydroelectric purposes. The Krupa river is the largest tributary of Zrmanja river and part of the Velebit Nature Park, as well as part of the European ecological network Natura 2000. Building a hydroelectric dam in a protected area would have significant impact on ecology and natural characteristic, which is why the area is under domestic and international protection.

“The decision by investors to back out of the project is more than welcome, as it is the only correct choice to preserve one of the basic natural phenomena responsible for Velebit Nature Park’s existence, the tuff barriers. Even the expert leadership of the Park was against the dam, which they have clearly conveyed to the investor,” said Irma Popović Dujmović, project coordinator in WWF Adria.

“What is the point of declaring someplace a park of nature, only to destroy the basic natural phenomena which it protects,” asks Tibor Mikuška, project leader in the Croatian Society for the Protection of Birds and Nature.

The private investor planned to build a hydroelectric power plant of 1.6 MW power with a 1.5 metre tall dam 45 metres long and a pipeline of 170 metres in length which would divert the river flow to the turbine. The entire undertaking would affect the river bottom on about 2.000 square metres, the size of five basketball fields, with mostly natural tuff barriers. The area is inaccessible so the investor considered using helicopters without considering the impact of noise, air swirls and exhaust gases on nature and animal life of this protected area.

“A very fresh experience from Mrežnica river and its Šušnjar waterfall, where unfortunately a small hydroelectric power plant was built, which caused the degradation of the locale and defacement of the scenery, shows that once such construction is allowed, the conditions of nature and environment protection are quickly forgotten,” warned Denis Frančišković from the Eko Pan association.