

Bosnia's fisheries watchdog gazes over an expanse of sand and mud, a space once occupied by a large thriving lake but recently emptied in the race for electricity production.

"I have nothing to do here anymore," said Emir Alebic by the greyish valley that was once the site of the artificially formed, 30-kilometre long Jablanica lake on the Neretva river in southern Bosnia.

The water level should soon begin to rise again, with snow on the surrounding mountains melting and rains starting to fall after a prolonged period of drought.

But fishermen and environmental groups say the damage has been done, with stocks of "more than two million" fish, such as perch and trout, "devastated" by the sudden drop in water about 40 days ago.

They blame the national power firm Elektroprivreda BiH, which manages the Jablanica dam and the hydroelectric power station about 30 kilometres west of the lake.

"This is an ecological catastrophe," said Hrabren Kapic, head of a local fishing association, the valley below him littered with dozens of stranded boats.

He admitted that the lake's water level had dropped in previous years—"but never like this".

The power firm said the drop in the lake's level was caused by "periods of exceptional drought" between September and January as well as very low temperatures last month which increased electricity consumption.

source: phys.org