

**Construction of 15 mini hydro power plants was planned on the Neretvica River, prompting several hundred residents of Konjic to protest. Members of the Eco Action Association, who are also members of the Banja Luka Environmental Center joined them, as well as members of the BiH River Coalition, and the Green Neretva Environmental Association of Konjic.**

They said that they would not give up on Neretvica, and that they would use all the legal means allowed to preserve this river, because life in the Neretvica valley takes place thanks to the wealth this river gives.

In recent days, a petition has been signed to save Neretvica called "Let Me Flow," and about 2,500 people have spoken out against the construction of mini hydropower plants on Neretvica.

Recently, a meeting was held in Konjic Municipality between representatives of Konjic Municipality, JP Elektroprivreda BiH, and a consortium of contractors, Amitea companies from Mostar and GPI from Konjic to inform the public about planned activities for the start of construction of mini hydro power plants. At the meeting they said that work on the construction of the first two of the planned 15 mini hydropower plants over a length of 34 kilometers of the Neretvica River should start soon.

These activities are planned on the basis of the Concession Contract for the construction of 15 mini hydro power plants, which Konjic Municipality signed with the representatives of JP Elektroprivreda BiH in 2009, and on the website of that public company it is stated that it is necessary to invest 10 million convertible marks (EUR 51 million) to build 15 small hydropower plants on Neretvica.

A member of the Neretvica River Conservation Coordination Board, Ibro Hero, says the issue has been going on for more than ten years. Namely, in 2008 Konjic Municipal Council decided to grant a concession for the construction of mini hydro power plants, with the consent of the local community, which was not a legal factor that could have made any decision since the law on local self-government in Konjic municipality was never implemented.

Another major mistake that has been crossed, as Hero points out, is the issue of an environmental permit, because in the Neretvica River we also have endemic cancers whose habitat must not be disturbed.

The environmental significance of the Neretvica River was also discussed by Amir Variscic, president of the Green Neretva Environmental Protection Association.

He said that due to the endemic types of river cancer in Neretvica, the European Bank for

## Rally against small hydro-power plants on Neretvica River in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Reconstruction and Development has dropped its credit to the mini hydropower project. An environmental impact study, commissioned by the EBRD, proved that the construction of hydroelectric power plants would affect habitats of crucial importance. What is worrying, Variscic pointed out, is the fact that the results of environmental studies commissioned by the line ministry showed that the construction of mini hydropower plants could not permanently disrupt the eco-system of the area, which is completely opposite to the studies commissioned by the European Bank for reconstruction and development. The petition to save the Neretvica River will continue to be signed in the coming days.

Source: [slobodnaevropa.org](http://slobodnaevropa.org)