

The waste management system in the region shared by Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina is inefficient. Some locals dump their waste into rivers.

There are tens of thousands of cubic meters of waste floating on the Drina and its tributaries in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. The three countries failed to improve the waste management system, so the environment is devastated and operators of dams and hydropower plants are struggling to cope. An environmental disaster struck the Drina river basin and threatened to halt the operation of hydropower plants, but the issue is not new. Whenever rivers rise from rain or snow, they reach improvised landfills on the banks and tons of waste get washed into water streams. As a chain of barrels just upstream from the dam in Višegrad in BiH gave way, as much as four thousand cubic meters of material reached the structure. Teams from the 315 MW hydropower plant later managed to fix the barrier, preventing more waste from piling up.

Hydropower plant operators cleaning up rivers

Nedjeljko Perišić, head of Hidroelektrane na Drini, the firm operating the hydroelectric unit, told the press that tens of thousands of cubic meters of floating waste are moving to Višegrad. He claimed the biggest volume was registered on the Lim river, which flows through all three countries. Waste is also floating down the Prača, Tara and Piva tributaries, Perišić stressed and warned precipitation would make matters even worse. His firm extracts up to 8,000 cubic meters of material every year.

Floating waste piling up at hydropower plant dam on Lim river

Waste is also accumulating at the Potpeć dam and 56 MW hydropower plant on the Lim river in Serbia. Some of it sinks and clogs up the intake, said Predrag Šaponjić, director of HE Limske, which runs the facility. He added the firm, owned by state power utility Elektroprivreda Srbije - EPS, has been hiring divers for the past 15 years to remove the trash. The Višegrad hydropower unit is controlled by Elektroprivreda Republike Srpske or ERS. The two state-owned companies are planning to add a string of hydroelectric plants on the Drina. The Republic of Srpska, one of the two entities making up Bosnia and Herzegovina, has a three-unit cascade project for the river's Bistrica tributary. BiH, Montenegro and Serbia have discussed the floating waste issue but failed to solve it.

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