

Wildlife campaigners on Monday called on the Albanian government to stop the construction of two hydropower plants

TIRANA, Albania (AP) — Wildlife campaigners on Monday called on the Albanian government to stop the construction of two hydropower plants in a protected nature area in the north of the country.

A statement from the World Wide Fund for Nature Adria said that a Supreme Court ruling to halt the construction has not been respected by the investor. The ruling said the work could not continue until the Administrative Court decides on it, which has not yet happened. The Administrative Court is considering a lawsuit brought by local residents and a nongovernmental organization who want to stop the project.

The power plants are planned for the Valbona Valley National Park, in the Albanian Alps, about 260 kilometers (160 miles) north of the capital, Tirana.

WWF Adria's Rea Nepravishta said that, "It has been proven beyond any doubt that small hydropower projects cause damage disproportionate to the electricity they produce".

"Albania is over-reliant on hydropower as the main source of energy and the government should look towards other sustainable and renewable energy sources, in particular solar", she said.

More than 95% of the country's electricity production comes from hydropower plants.

The government granted an Albanian company the concession to build the power stations in 2009, despite an outcry from locals.

Albania's coastline and numerous mountainous parks have suffered damage during the past three decades of post-communist government due to illegal construction or logging.

Source: apnews.com