



Summary of Vindel River LIFE's Final conference, "Reviving Waters"

The final conference was a three-day event (22-24/9/2014), held in Lycksele, Sweden. It gathered more than 100 attendees from ten countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Latvia, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Ireland, England, Scotland, and the US) for some 30 presentations, a poster session and a field trip to project sites.

LIFE projects represented included MulkearLIFE in Ireland (LIFE07 NAT/IRL/000342), LIVEDRAVA in Slovenia (LIFE11 NAT/SI/000882), UC4LIFE (LIFE10 NAT/SE/000046), ReMiBar (LIFE10 NAT/SE/000045) in Sweden and the UK project, RESTORE (LIFE09 INF/UK/000032). There was also a presentation on the preparation of Finland's first proposal for an Integrated Project (on freshwaters). All presentations, talks and posters, were of excellent quality. Anders Esselin (man and Nature) was hired as the conference facilitator, which he did exceptionally well: he was meticulously prepared and had read many articles related to the various talks, had emailed and /or talked to most speakers in advanced and hence prepared several questions for all speakers. This really prepared for interesting and fruitful discussions.

The project had invited six national and international guests to cover the great number of fields within river restoration: The Finnish restorationist Ari Eloranta, with more than 30 years of experience of restoring channelized rivers (used for floating) in Finland; The Finnish researcher Pauliina Louhi, with many years of experience of doing research and monitoring in restored Finnish rivers; Hamish Moir from Scotland, a fluvial geomorphologist with more than 20 years' experience working in the water resource sector, both in research and consultancy capacities; Ulrika Åberg, who in her work at the UK River Restoration Centre bridge the gaps between science and practice. She is further the current manager of the RiverWiki database; Antonia Scarr, previously the project coordinator for the RESTORE EU LIFE+ project (2010-2013) and today works as an Environment Manager for the Department of Energy and Climate Change in the UK where she provides environmental advice to the government department; Lennart Henrikson who previously was one of the project leaders of the EU LIFE project "The freshwater pearl mussel and its habitats in Sweden" (2004-2009) and today has his own company, focusing on water protection within forestry.

The conference included lots of opportunities to socialize and network. The conference dinner was very much appreciated, not only for the great local food, but also for the excellent entertainment by Carolina Miskovsky and Marcus Granberg. Carolina is from a village by the Vindel River and she has a great fishing interest. They alternated their tunes with Carolina's fun and amazing fishing stories from her childhood fishing with her family in the river and from more recent fly fishing trips along the river. Carolina also talked a lot about her experiences of growing up as a European, in northern Sweden, with parents from the Czech Republic and Finland.

Conference Programme

The conference involved an introduction part, four sessions including both 20 minute full talks and 6 minute speed talks, and a one-day field trip. The introduction included a welcome speech of Fredrik Nordwall, SwAM, an introduction of the Vindel River itself by the project coordinator Christer Nilsson, and an overview about Vindel River LIFE by the project leader Johanna Gardeström. The first session, "Getting your feet wet", included talks about the technical part of restoration. Daniel Holmqvist presented the restoration work done by Vindel River LIFE. The invited speaker of this session was Hamish Moir, cbec eco-engenering, who presented four case studies from Scotland which represents the spectrum of process restoration application done there. Dr. Moir concluded that, by using models of physical/ geomorphic process, physical river processes can always be considered in restoration design. The second session, "Digging deeper", included follow-up studies and research done in restored rivers. Judith Sarneel and Daniel Palm presented follow-up work done in the Demonstration sites in the Vindel River LIFE project. Invited speaker of this session was Lennart Henrikson (Natur och Människa), who highlighted the importance of combining river restoration with good forest management. The key issue for adaptive forestry is involving the forest owners in restoration work and in field courses, to learn about the significance of the stream in the whole forest ecosystem. The third session, "Wrapping it up", included talks from people involved in finalized restoration projects and those working with distributing restoration information to stakeholder e.g., the public, restorationists, scientists, and politicians. Invited speakers of this session were Antonia Scarr and Ulrika Åberg. Antonia Scarr pinpointed the need to communicate the benefits of a quality water environment to a broader public to aid member states in the delivery of the European Directives. Better valuation of ecosystem services that water provides would help us to communicate the benefits of a quality water environment and support management of the whole river catchment from source to sea. Ulrika Åberg presented an overview of the work that River Restoration Center (RRC) and the European Centre for River Restoration (ECRR) carries out, work that is unknown to many in Sweden. Dr. Åberg further presented the online RiverWiki database, one of the key achievements of the RESTORE partnership to address the gap in accessible information. The audience concurred that the RiverWiki is a promising start in making restoration information more accessible. The fourth session was in Swedish and pretty much summed up all English presentations about the project. This session was open to the general public. The session was advertised in two local newspapers and in three weekly village-information folders (all attached). Apart from five of the conference participants, 12 people showed up to this open session. The last day was spent in the field, visiting 3 of the sites restored by Vindel River LIFE. For this trip we had to hire two busses so that everyone who wanted to join could. In one of the busses we had Swedish speaking guide that took care of the group (Daniel Holmqvist) and in the other bus Daniel Jonsson, Marcus stenman and Johanna Gardeström did the guiding in English. The bus did four stops during the day, three at restoration sites and one for lunch (in a National Reserve):

Excursion 24/9 2014

Falåströmsbäcken

Falåströmsbäcken is one of the project demonstration sites (action C.1) and was restored in September 2010. Large boulders, large woody debris (LWD) and gravel were added to complement previous restoration from 1996. The participants were informed about demonstration restoration methodology and how it differs from general (best practice restoration) restoration.

Ruskträskbäcken

Ruskträskbäcken was restored in 2011. The focus there was constructing spawning areas, mainly for brown trout (action C.3). The excursion participants were informed about the procedures and techniques used in the Vindel River LIFE project. This was further demonstrated by our machine foreman Daniel Jonsson and his field assistant Marcus Stenman. They used a special designed cargo ropeway to demonstrate the spawning ground work. This ropeway works in that way that a wire is drawn from high in a tree, to the location of the planned spawning ground. One person is needed on land, filling buckets with gravel, and then connecting the bucket to the wire before pushing it out to the colleague on the bed, which then empties the bucket before he/she pushes it back to the person on land, and so on. Participants were also informed that 14 spawning areas were restored using external gravel. This gravel was transported to the stream by the local Fishing management organization in wintertime. After the demonstration, everyone had coffee and dry reindeer meat and/or coffee cheese. These are both very typical “snacks” of the area and they were very much appreciated by the participants.

Klinddammen, Nackbäcken

Excursion participants were informed that Klinddammen was restored in 2012 in order to reopen connectivity of the valuable stream Nackbäcken. The old dam was built during the float way era. At the site, we described the procedures when reopening the dam, in order to keep the water levels the same as prior the removal. We further talked about how important it is to not destroy the old float way constructions, apart from the dam itself, to preserve cultural history values.

Mårdseleforsen, Vindel River

We stopped for a late lunch at Mårdseleforsen, a Nature Reserve where float way objects with high cultural history values have been preserved in educational purposes and as culture-history monuments for future generations. After a good and warming salmon soup, we all had about 30-40 minutes to walk around in the Nature Reserve before the project crew thanked all the participants and the busses took us all back to Lycksele, to connecting flights etc.

One of the greatest strengths of the conference was the mixture of participants, including stakeholders, researchers, and practitioners. Some of the most obvious lessons from the meeting were the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration; that the information /knowledge bank has to be made more available (RiverWiki is a good start!); and that we need to find ways to reach politicians and other decision makers. All of the sessions, the poster presentation, the formal and informal gatherings, the entertainment by Carolina Miskovsky and Marcus Granberg, and the field trip were really enjoyable for many and the participant feedback was exceptionally positive.