

**Topic:**

Collaborative approaches to EFN management

**Title:**

Listen to the River: Lessons from a global review of environmental flow success stories

Globally, natural river flows have been altered by a proliferation of dams, changing land use and urbanisation, and over-abstraction of water. Poor water governance has enabled, and now compounds, these threats, which are also likely to be exacerbated by the effects of climate change. During the last two decades many countries have recognized the integral part that environmental flows should play in water management and have incorporated environmental flow provisions as they have updated water policy. These efforts have faced significant challenges, including a lack of political will and stakeholder support, insufficient resources and capacity, competition for water among other sectors, and institutional barriers and conflicts of interest. Despite these obstacles, many success stories in e-flow implementation have emerged.

We reviewed case studies from jurisdictions around the world that have led to the successful protection or restoration of environmental flows. Eight case studies were chosen for rivers that encompass different political, developmental, institutional, social, climatological and ecological contexts and where environmental flows were actually implemented to some degree. A range of stakeholders (i.e., advocates, sceptics, and water managers) from each case study were interviewed to provide information and perspective on how environmental flows came to be implemented through real-life politics and policy interventions. By speaking to the stakeholders involved we gained an understanding of the barriers to e-flow implementation, the factors that enabled these barriers to be overcome, what triggered action, and what monitoring was undertaken to assess success. Here we showcase these success stories and present enabling factors that are important to successful environmental flow implementation with benefits for society and ecosystems.

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