

Reviving Rivers: Fast-Tracking Solutions for Climate Resilience

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SYMPOSIUM SATELLITE EVENT #2 KEY MESSAGES



The International River Foundation

For over twenty years, the International River Foundation (IRF) has championed river resilience to create a legacy of healthy rivers that benefit ecosystems, communities and economies. Through the platform of people, ideas and impact, the IRF collaborates with global partners to help drive river restoration projects worldwide and accelerate action towards resilient rivers for future generations.

2025 International River Symposium

The 25th International River Symposium (IRS), held in Vienna in 2022, highlighted inspiring global efforts to advocate for and protect rivers. Participants emphasised the need for stronger commitments to restoration and protection.

The upcoming 26th IRS will return to the River City of Brisbane from 8–10 September 2025, aligning with the Brisbane Festival.

The event's theme, "River Revolution: Accelerating Solutions for Climate Resilience," underscores the urgency for transformative ideas and actions. Through this event, the IRF aims to inspire innovation and spark practical solutions that address the pressing challenges of climate change.

Symposium Satellite Event #2

The past decade has seen a surge in restoration initiatives, particularly in terrestrial ecosystems, with commitments reaching approximately 1 billion hectares globally.

To raise the bar and ambition for restoring ecosystems, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) Target 2 calls for at least 30 percent of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and marine and coastal ecosystems to be under

effective restoration by 2030, with the aim of enhancing biodiversity, ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity, and connectivity.

The Freshwater Challenge—the world's largest initiative to restore degraded rivers, lakes, and wetlands and to protect vital freshwater ecosystems—aims to ensure that 186,411 miles of degraded rivers and more than 864 million acres of degraded wetlands are designated to be

restored by 2030. It also includes protecting intact ecosystems.

River restoration networks are vital for sharing knowledge, fostering collaboration, and driving global efforts to restore and protect river ecosystems. By working together, these networks help ensure the long-term health and resilience of rivers, which are crucial for biodiversity, water security, and the well-being of millions of people worldwide

SYMPOSIUM SATELLITE EVENT #2 KEY MESSAGES



Dr Stuart Orr
Freshwater Practice Lead at
World Wide Fund for Nature



Prof Ian Rutherford
Chair of the Alluvium Foundation
and Professor at the University
of Melbourne



Bart Fokkens
Associate Expert, Co-Founder
and Patron of the European
Centre for River Restoration
(ECRR)



Prof Fengran Xu
Professor at the China Institute
of Water Resources and
Hydropower Research (IWHR)



Dr Siwan Lovett
CEO and Founder of the
Australian River Restoration
Centre



Dr Karin Olsson
Project Manager at the County
Administrative Board of Scania



Dr Jo Burton
Director of the Resilient Rivers
South East Queensland, an
initiative of Council of Mayors
(SEQ)



Martin Janes
Managing Director of the River
Restoration Centre and Chair of
the ECRR



Salvador Rico
Rotarian



Scott Shipley
Director of Whitewater, Calibre
Engineering

Restore and protect our rivers to address the global biodiversity crisis

Rivers support diverse wildlife and provide essential ecosystem services, such as clean water, flood regulation, and nutrient cycling. Restoring and protecting rivers is crucial to halting biodiversity loss, as healthy rivers sustain ecosystems. Immediate action is needed to preserve these lifelines for both nature and human communities.

Frame river restoration within the context of economic incentives

By highlighting long-term financial benefits, such as reduced flood damage and improved water quality, businesses and communities are more likely to support restoration efforts. Economic incentives, such as nature-based solutions, environmental offsets, and payment for ecosystem services, can help secure funding and ensure the long-term success of these initiatives.

Step up to the climate challenge by prioritising river restoration

Healthy, resilient rivers serve as natural carbon sinks, sequestering carbon dioxide and fostering biodiversity. Restoring these rivers enhances ecosystem resilience, empowering communities to better adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Recognise that rivers touch on every aspect of communities

Rivers support ecosystems that sustain life. They have deep cultural significance, shaping local traditions, folklore, and spiritual practices that connect people to their environment. They are crucial for trade, agriculture, and tourism, while also serving as communal spaces for recreation and connection, influencing both local economies and social interactions.

River Restoration Networks - empowering communities to achieve a future where nature and communities coexist

River Restoration Networks provide tools, knowledge, and support needed to restore and protect local rivers. These networks drive essential on-the-ground work by promoting best practices through demonstration sites and case studies, advocating for nature-based solutions, and connecting practitioners with researchers, corporates and policymakers.

Civic organisations - investing in social capital for healthy rivers

Through education, advocacy, and partnerships, civic organisations like Rotary, empower local communities to take ownership of their rivers and work together towards long-term environmental sustainability. By investing in social capital, these organisations create lasting relationships and networks.

Underpin restoration efforts with adaptive management, rigorous science, effective monitoring and communication frameworks

Adaptive management ensures river restoration strategies can evolve based on real-time data and changing conditions. Rigorous science, monitoring, and communication frameworks are essential for tracking progress, making informed decisions, and engaging stakeholders throughout the restoration process.

Engage with influential stakeholders across diverse motivations

Understanding the different motivations of stakeholders helps build support and foster collaboration. By addressing their interests, we can ensure sustained involvement and create more effective, inclusive restoration strategies.

Scale up river restoration efforts across the world

Scaling up river restoration efforts ensures greater connectivity between fragmented habitats, increasing the overall impact and success of restoration projects. This will lead to more resilient rivers capable of adapting to climate change and supporting local communities.



European Centre for River Restoration

The ECRR aims to encourage and support ecological river restoration, connect people and organisations, support best practice river restoration, and disseminate knowledge.



Australian River Restoration Centre

Founded in 2008, the ARRC is a charity restoring rivers and empowering others to do the same. Everything the ARRC does is underpinned by the belief that rivers and people need each other to thrive.



Asian River Restoration Network

A non-political network promoting knowledge exchange on river and watershed restoration in Asia. It connects organisations and individuals, fostering collaboration and advancing scientific technology to enhance river environments.



Position rivers and water (with climate) on the front pages of newspapers

We need to raise the profile of rivers and water in light of climate change, using the right language. This increased visibility can drive policy changes, funding, and community action to protect and restore vital water resources.

Be cognizant of the political frameworks and levers of river restoration and protection

Key policies and regulations that drive river restoration and protection efforts enables stakeholders to navigate decision-making processes and secure funding and support.

"Alone we can do little, but together we can do a lot" - Dr Siwan Lovett

River restoration is a collective effort that requires the collaboration of communities, governments, scientists, and businesses. By combining resources, expertise, and shared vision, we can tackle the complex challenges that threaten our rivers. When we work together, our combined impact can create lasting, meaningful change, ensuring healthy and resilient rivers for future generations.

