

REFORM final conference - a major success!

From 30th June to 2nd July 2015, the **very successful final conference** of the REFORM project on 'Novel Approaches to Assess and Rehabilitate Modified Rivers' took place in the Conference Center Hof van Wageningen, in the Netherlands. This scientific conference was organized to highlight the importance of the benefits of river restoration and was opened by Jaap Kwadijk, scientific director of Deltares and Peter Glas, President of the Dutch Association of Regional Water Authorities.

An inspiring scientific programme

170 participants from **26** countries shared experiences, aspirations, challenges, analytical frameworks and new approaches to enhance the success of river restoration and to come to a better understanding of the consequences of hydro-morphological changes to the ecological status of running waters. The conference attracted universities and research institutes, environmental management organisations, NGOs and consulting firms in the field of river restoration.

15 keynote lectures from Europe, North America and New Zealand, **58 oral** presentations in breakout sessions and **38 posters** provided the ingredients and inspiration for **animated conversations** during the breaks.

Among others, evidence outlined by the conference speakers and participants gave fundamental insights into how rivers work, and presented a wide span of research from global to catchment and all the way down to the species level. It became evident that attention is shifting towards reflecting on the river in its **full scope including the role of the riparian zone and the floodplain for ecosystem functioning**. Keynote and oral presentations made a case for the need to develop more **process-oriented restoration measures**, and to consider hydromorphological changes and their evolution both in terms of space and time.

A lot of **inspiration** for further work was given by presentations on the **application of biotic indices for the assessment of river ecological conditions** as well as by a multitude of case studies presented on the achievements by restoration and mitigation practices in Europe and beyond.

The conference also provided a platform for exchanging experiences and ongoing work on the **challenging issues of socioeconomic assessments** related to river restoration, tools and strategies for more closely **linking science to the practitioner level**.

Social programme and field trip highlights

The conference dinner was hosted in the hotel 'De Wageningsche Berg' offering wonderful views of the river Rhine and its floodplains as well as an inspiring speech by Professor **Geoff Petts** (Vice Chancellor of University of Westminster) on the **history of river restoration**.

The conference closed with a field excursion, attended by **100** people, to two 'Room for the river' projects:

- 'Waal sprong' at Nijmegen where flood protection and urban development are the main objectives (<http://www.ruimtevoordewaal.nl/en/room-for-the-river-waal/>) and
- The floodplain rehabilitation 'Millingerwaard' where in addition to flood protection improving nature is very important (<https://www.ark.eu/kom-kijken/gelderse-poort/millingerwaard>; in Dutch)

The excursion came with exceptionally high temperatures, so the participants appreciated the farewell refreshing boat trip on the Rhine giving another perspective on the river and its floodplains.

Where to find further information

The conference proceedings can be found on the REFORM conference website.

We would like to thank very much all participants for their active participation, contributions and very positive feedback that made this conference such a successful event.

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