

25th International **RIVER** *SYMPOSIUM*

Journey to Resilience:
Communities, Climate & Biodiversity
27th November - 1st December 2022 | Vienna & Online

A REPORT TO OUR PARTNERS



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25th International RIVER SYMPOSIUM



Thank you

The International RiverFoundation (IRF) is proud to have partnered with the International Association for Water Service Companies in the Danube River Catchment (IAWD) to host the 25th Anniversary of the International Riversymposium (IRS) in the beautiful City of Vienna – recent winner of the Lee Kwan Yew World City prize. The Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK) provided an exciting main venue for the Riversymposium – Tech Gate.

Thank you to our passionate partners and delegates for your role in making the 25th International Riversymposium a success!

We are proud of the longevity and commitment of Brisbane City Council (BCC) and Thiess Group Holdings (Thiess), who, this year, are our 25th Anniversary partners.

Recognising the new realities of our world, IRS continued to be a hybrid event – in-person in Vienna and online around the world. Recordings of the main plenary sessions and selected workshops are now online for viewing.

One of the core highlights of a Riversymposium is the content creation process that is cognizant of both in-person and online delegate experiences. We acknowledge our keynotes, panellists, facilitators and presenters for embracing the hybrid process and ensuring that both our face-to-face and virtual delegates were engaged. We acknowledge your invaluable contributions, knowledge, insights, and inspiring key take-home messages.

Exciting oral and video presentations showcased the great work that is being done in rivers and waterways around the world. We wish to thank our workshop partners who took time to prepare and run inspiring, topical and interesting workshops through the day. The Riversymposium was fortunate to have representation from many of the world's large transboundary river basins including Great Lakes and St Lawrence, Danube, Mekong, Ganges, Yangtze, and Orange Senqu, as well as other rivers around the world. Many key international organisations attended, including the World Bank Group, Global Environment Facility (GEF), Asian Development Bank (ADB), UN Environment Program (UNEP), UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as well as a number of national governments and key international NGO's such as the World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF), The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Global Water Partnership (GWP).

The International Riversymposium is more than just a meeting of great minds and sharing of knowledge – it is also about celebrating our passion for rivers. It is about giving our rivers a voice and recognising the achievements that have been realised to achieve healthy and resilient rivers. This year, the 2022 European River Prize, a prize for excellence in river basin management, was awarded to the Cumbria Rivers in north-east England during the 25th Anniversary Gala Dinner.

Delegates were treated to the various beautiful facets of the City of Vienna: from the architecturally magnificent Palais Ferstel which was the venue for the 2022 Gala Dinner and Awarding of the European River Prize hosted by the City of Vienna; to the welcome networking function held on the top floor Sky Bar of Tech Gate overlooking the Danube River, sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Austria Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management; to an inspiring and educational field trip on the Danube River hosted by Via Donau.

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Networking Event sponsored by the Global Water Partnership was a great way to recognise and share insights around the need to ensure that these topics are threads that ran throughout our activities. A special feature of the 25th Riversymposium was convening a cross-generational discussion among conference participants – something which the International RiverFoundation will continue to encourage in upcoming events.

Whether you are dependent on or impacted by rivers; or both - the time to engage in the journey to resilience is now. It is your involvement that made the International Riversymposium so compelling, inspirational and successful.

On behalf of the International RiverFoundation and IAWD Board and team, **Thank you!** We look forward to meeting you all at the 26th International Riversymposium which will be held in Brisbane, Australia.

Dr. Eva Abal and Philip Weller

Co-convenors, IRS 2022



Dr. Eva Abal

International RiverFoundation



Philip Weller

International Association of
Water Service Companies in
the Danube River Catchment

FAST FACTS

436

Total Delegates

55

Countries

5

Days

1

River Prize

105

Virtual Delegates

1

Field Trip

24

Keynote
Speakers

40

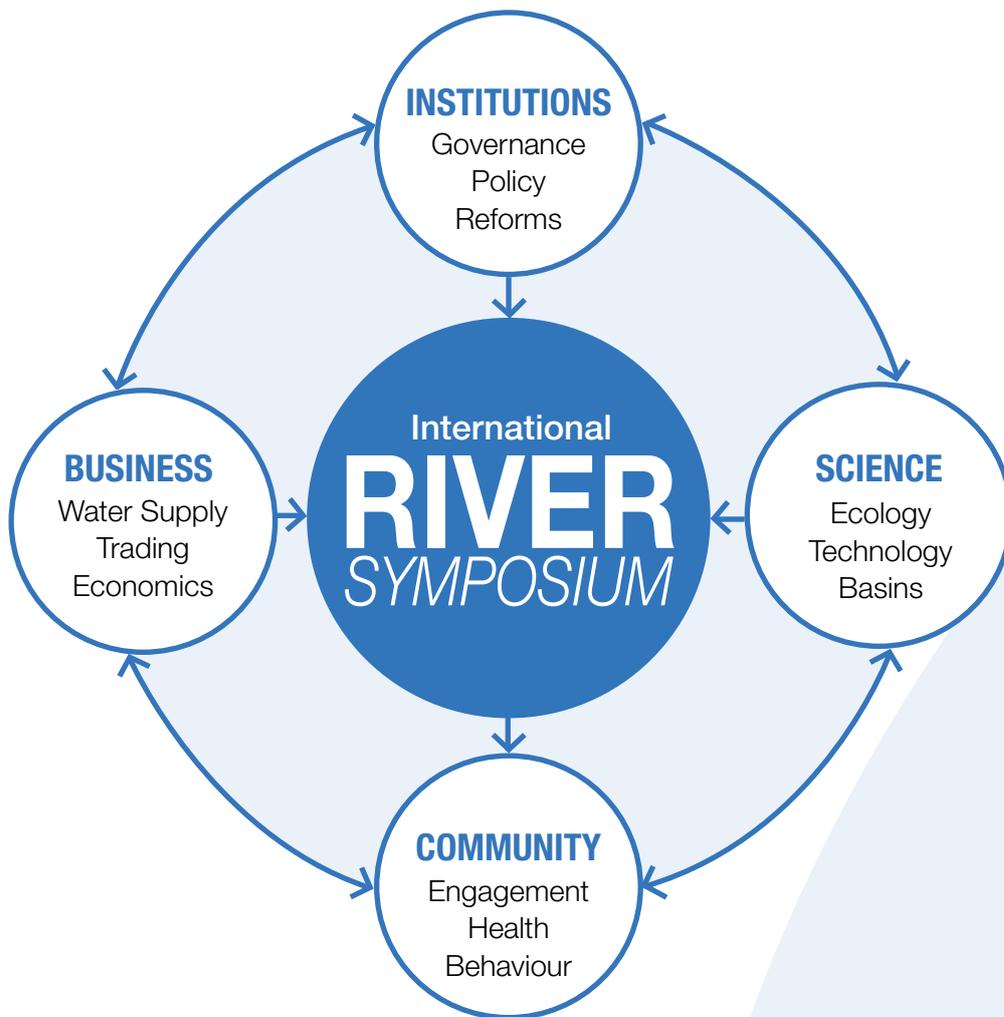
Abstract
Presenters

17

Workshops

What is the International Riversymposium?

The International Riversymposium is the pre-eminent international river conference linking business to science, policy and communities.



RIVERSYMPOSIUM OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Celebrate best practice and the “knowledge portal”
- ✓ Create a global network of experts and practitioners
- ✓ Address river and catchment issues in urban and rural settings
- ✓ Facilitate business opportunities related to river management
- ✓ Be a catalyst of reform in policy and practice

Uniting river managers globally. Developing the business of water and river management. Designed to leverage the exchange of knowledge and best practices in river management to the world.

We connect government, business, scientists, communities and individuals, providing the expertise, opportunity and support to be part of the solution, and to establish an inspiring and enduring legacy to work towards the resilience of rivers.



EXCELLENCE - COLLABORATION - INTEGRATION

A Global Audience

The COVID pandemic has impacted our lives on a global scale. Many of us continue to adapt to the transformational effects of the pandemic and are exploring alternative methods and opportunities for staying connected and working together.

The 25th International Riversymposium was held as a hybrid event, allowing us to continue delivering an engaging experience to our online audiences and in-person attendees in the beautiful City of Vienna.

This year we partnered with Brutkasten, who helped connect audiences all over the world to participate in IRS 2022. With this partnership, we were able to livestream the event to our online audiences, bring in online speakers to our in-person audiences and provide interactivity between our online and in-person audiences.



Behind the scenes of online streaming

“What struck me walking into my first International Riversymposium was the breadth of diversity in the room. Talented, passionate people from different backgrounds, cultures and languages who had travelled from all corners of the world had come together for a common good. It was also obvious that there was an overwhelming desire for meaningful connection and collaboration. Many experts, in different countries who couldn’t make it to Vienna, stayed up late and into the early hours of the morning to tell their stories online. In a world where people consume content when and where they want, it was important to provide a hybrid platform that encouraged easy access and global participation. Recognising that we all have a part to play, and thanks to our incredible digital partners, we were able to bring together a truly global community: both in-person and online. This community shared knowledge and best practice, and pledged their commitment to work together to take action to champion river resilience; a goal which lies at the very heart of the International RiverFoundation.

Jodie Bignall, International RiverFoundation



Presenters were able to join us virtually from all over the world

Vienna 2022



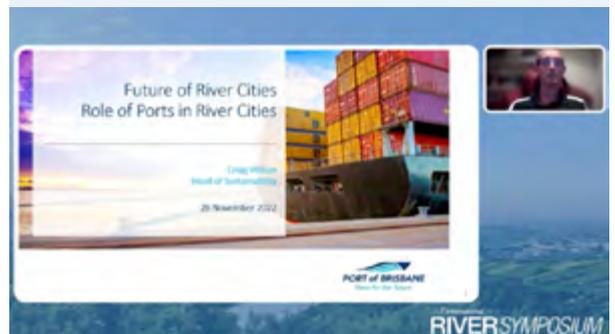
Captivated audience during Veronica Manfredi's keynote presentation on Day 1 of the Symposium

Walter Kling inviting delegates to be seated for the Gala Dinner in the breathtaking Palais Ferstel



Mr. Günter Liebel and Veronica Manfredi dancing to the Danube Waltz during Monday night's welcome function

Virtual presentation from Craig Wilson in the Future of River Cities workshop session



A full audience for an exciting abstract presentation

Thank you to all of our sponsors who joined us on stage during the Gala Dinner



Program Highlights



Gala Dinner

The 25th Anniversary Gala Dinner was held in Vienna's architecturally breathtaking Palais Ferstel on the second night of the Symposium. All delegates received a special personal invitation from the Mayor of Vienna and were treated to an evening of fine food and drinks, networking and celebration. The highlight of the night was the announcement of the 2022 European River Prize winner, the Rivers of Cumbria and the Lake District National Park.



Welcome Function

With a view of the picturesque Danube River and City of Vienna, Mr Günter Liebel, Secretary General of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management, welcomed the delegates to the City of Vienna and the International *Riversymposium*. His speech was accompanied by Johann Strauss' Danube Waltz, with delegates joining Mr Liebel in a customary waltz.



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

It is vital to foster diversity, ensure equity and promote inclusion in all aspects of river management. In partnership with the Global Water Partnership, this special session talked about strategies to amplify the voices of communities and groups who are most vulnerable to the impacts of environmental and climate threats. It brought together voices of diverse people and groups within river basin management, enabling us all to ensure and celebrate diversity, equity, and inclusion in our rivers.



Corporate Lunch

Hosted by Thiess and moderated by the International RiverFoundation Director Dr Peter Rowley, representatives from corporate companies, governments and NGO's from around the world attended a lunch to openly discuss *The Role of Business in Fast Tracking Environmental Markets to Achieve River Resilience*. The adoption of carbon abatement and sequestration, water quality improvement, plastic reduction and biodiversity enhancement were among the topics discussed to help address environmental and climate change challenges. The group made a pledge to continue to share learnings in 2023 through a private LinkedIn group.

Keynote Speakers



The Honourable Adrian Schrinner

Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Inaugural Member of the International RiverFoundation RiverPatrons

Opening and Closing Remarks

“Brisbane River is a defining part of the City of Brisbane – it links together our inner-city precincts and is the backdrop for a whole range of outdoor adventures, activities and major attractions. Like other rivers in the world, Brisbane has also had its fair share of droughts and this year, floods. Rivers are the lifeblood of communities, cities and industries around the world but as they are facing significant challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, lives and livelihoods suffer. Let us continue to work together to ensure our rivers are there for future generations.”



Walter Kling

President, International Association of Water Service Companies in the Danube River Catchment (IAWD), Deputy Managing Director of Vienna Waterworks, City of Vienna

Welcome Address

“It is a pleasure to welcome delegates to the City of Vienna, a truly international river city. We are excited to share the work that we are doing here in the Danube River, together with IAWD, ICPDR, and the general community. We look forward to this exchange of knowledge for the future of river cities.”



Dr. Stuart Orr

Freshwater Manager, World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF)

Valuing Rivers: The Hidden Benefits of Healthy Rivers Around the World

“Rivers are among the most important, productive and biodiverse ecosystems on Earth. So rivers can no longer be treated as just another resource to be harvested, dammed, diverted, polluted, and drained — but as the dynamic arteries they actually are. They are the lifeblood of our societies, economies and myriad ecosystems. If the world continues to undervalue and overlook rivers, then we can kiss goodbye tackling our climate and nature crises. It is time for the world to wake up to rivers.”



Vera Hofbauer

**Head of Directorate General IV Transport, Federal Ministry of Austria
Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology**

Implementation of European Water Framework Directive: The Danube River –
Practical examples incorporating sectoral interests

“The Danube River showcases how the European Water Framework Directive can be implemented, incorporating sectoral interests. The Ministry has an integrated approach to environment, energy, transport and safety. The Dynamic LIFE Line Danube is an Austrian-Slovak cooperation for the restoration of floodplains along the river Danube and focuses on threatened riverine and alluvial habitats and endangered species along the Danube in eastern Austria and Slovakia. In both countries, a total of 25 km of side-arms will be increasingly connected to the Danube and thus made more dynamic.”



Neeta Pokhrel

Chief of Water Sector Group, Asian Development Bank

Asia Pacific Water Resilience Hub - connecting, collaborating, and collectively building capacity of water entities on the ground, where it matters the most!

“Water resilience is a priority for Asia and the Pacific. Convened by ADB’s Water Sector Group, the Water Resilience Hub is open to all and engages with partners and clients in the region, such as ministries and other government entities, policy makers, the private sector, research centres and academic institutions, resource managers, specialised training centres, think tanks and water utilities. Join the Asia Pacific Water Resilience Hub to connect, collaborate, and collectively build capacity of water entities on the ground, where it matters the most!”



Dr. Robert Fenz

Austrian Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management

Austrian Governmental Presentation on European Water Framework Directive Implementation Incorporating Sectoral Interests in Water Policy

“The aim of the EU Water Framework Directive (2000) is to improve the status of aquatic ecosystems, as well as to prevent deterioration of status. Every 6 years, member states prepare river basin management plans including a program of measures to achieve these objectives. The measures are derived on the basis of an analysis of significant pressures on water status, monitoring results and an economic analysis of water uses. Measures to improve and maintain the ecological status influence the interests of various sectors.”



Veronica Manfredi

Director for Zero Pollution and Green Cities, Quality of Life, Director General Environment European Commission

Europe’s Green Deal and Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

“The pandemic has shown us that working together (tightly knitted cooperation and constructed involvement of all actors) can make a difference in addressing the key challenges that our rivers are facing. Despite 22 years of the Water Framework Directive in place, the implementation of transboundary actions for the benefit of the ecosystem has a long way to go. 2023 will be a crucial year for water. We need to unite towards a common water agenda.”



Lenka Thamae and Henry Lickers



Walter Kling and Veronica Manfredi



Dr. Carlos Manuel Rodriguez

CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility

Day 2 Opening Video Address

“The GEF and the Danube cooperation share special parallels in their respective histories. The unprecedented biodiversity and water and pollution crises facing the planet require us to step up actions and find smarter, faster, and more cooperative ways to tackle the compounding problems. Nature-based solutions and giving room for our rivers are good examples of these actions.”



Lenka Thamae

Executive Secretary, Orange Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM)

Joint Action, Balancing Trade-Offs and Deepening Trust and Transparency Among States that Share Transboundary Water

“Joint actions to deepen transboundary water cooperation in implementing the basin strategic objectives in the Orange Senqu River Basin are crucial. Transboundary water cooperation should be anchored on the recognition of interdependence of states beyond just water. Countries cooperate in good faith, for peaceful co-existence, through mutual respect, trust and solidarity, but this does not remove individual state interest and sovereignty. The central requirement for continued investment in joint water cooperation actions, including water infrastructure, hinges on financial commitment by State Parties themselves.”



Dr. Henry Lickers

Canadian Commissioner, International Joint Commission

River People are Special People: Understanding the True Songs of Our Rivers

“River People are Special People - understanding the true songs of our rivers is very important. The IJC’s International Watersheds Initiative is an ecosystem-focused framework for research, outreach, and conflict prevention and resolution in transboundary watersheds. Working with Indigenous governments, local communities, agencies, organizations and experts is essential for identifying and resolving potential problems before they become bigger issues.”



Birgit Vogel

Executive Secretary of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)

Shared River of Transformation: Challenges, Actions and Impacts of Joint Management in the Danube Basin

“The transformation of the Danube River has always been driven by the challenges this mighty transboundary river has been facing. These drivers saw the journey from the historical transformation of the Danube as Connector, to the Danube for Cooperation, to the Danube Transnational Monitoring, to the Danube River Basin Management Plan, to the Danube water resilience, Stakeholder involvement and the Danube River Basin cooperation transformation into the future. Reacting to challenges with the transformation is an ICPDR strength – identifying and responding to current and future challenges.”



Dr. Anoulak Kittikhoun

CEO, Mekong River Commission

Towards New Days for the Mighty Mekong

“The Mekong, a great world river on every scale, is facing unprecedented challenges in environmental, social, economic, climate and cooperation dimensions. To save the Mekong by 2030, four fundamental shifts are needed: proactive regional planning, coordination and management of water infrastructures, consolidation and modernisation of decision support systems, and enhancement of entire basin management arrangement.”



G. Asok Kumar

Director General, National Mission for Clean Ganga

Experiences from the Ganga River Basin

“The Ganga River is a very important river for the culture and economy of India. The Namami Ganga Mission is an integrated river rejuvenation for the Ganga River Basin and its tributaries. With a holistic approach, it works on pollution abatement, improving ecological and flow and strengthening people’s connections with the river. Consisting of over 400 projects, it is one of the largest and recognised river rejuvenation programs in the world. The program is seeing a number of key achievements to-date, including afforestation, conservation and preservation of biodiversity, improvement in water quality and public awareness and participation.”



Minister Leonore Gewessler

Federal Minister for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology

Address to Delegates

“Rivers are the lifeblood of our communities but are among the most threatened elements of our natural ecosystems. There are very strong links between rivers and the threats from climate change and biodiversity loss. The importance of International Cooperation and the work of the transboundary river commissions are critical to good management. While there is a need to applaud and encourage concrete actions to protect and restore rivers, Interdisciplinary Research is important to guide much-needed decisions.”



Dr. Yang Zhi

Huai River Commission, Ministry of Water Resources, China

Water Management in the Huai River Basin

“The Huai River Basin is located in the east of China, with the Yellow River to the north and the Yangtze River to the south and located in the transitional zone from the southern to the northern climate of China. Like other river systems, it is challenged with increasing frequencies of floods and droughts. Structural and non-structural measures have been put in place to manage these risks. Extreme weather events and climate change are posing uncertainties and difficulties in watershed management, and requires more efforts into flood prevention and disaster reduction.”



Dr. Huang Yan

Changjiang Water Resources Commission, Ministry of Water Resources

River Management for the High-Quality Development of the Changjiang River Basin

“Changjiang River basin, also known as Yangtze River, is the largest and most important river basin in China. As the strategic base for water resources, green energy, food production and ecological barriers, Changjiang river plays a vital role in the development of China’s economy. A strategic approach is in place to ensure water security and to facilitate the development and protection needs in the Changjiang River basin. Discussion has been made on the changes and challenges caused by climate change and human activities, as well as increasing requirements from high quality or green development. To cope with those problems and difficulties, a “to-do” list is outlined for future work.”



Mina Guli

CEO, Thirst Foundation

Video Address to Delegates

“The world is experiencing a water crisis. Drought, flooding or pollution are how most of us will experience this climate emergency – yet water is often missing from global conversations. #RunBlue is a global campaign to move the world on water by uniting business, non-government organisations, government and the general public in the lead-up to the UN 2023 Water Conference in March, 2023.”

Henry Lickers



Dr. Stuart Orr



Birgit Vogel





Dario Soto-Abril

Executive Secretary and CEO, Global Water Partnership

Address on Behalf of GWP

“Water is crucial to build a just, inclusive and climate resilient future for all. Inequality exists throughout the world in relation to damages that come from rivers – floods and droughts. The limited success in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals related to water supply and sanitation also exposes the significant inequality in many areas. GWP and other organizations have promoted important steps to address the improvement of diversity in river management and water-related decision making. There is a strong need for intergenerational dialogue to strengthen our overall capacities and ensure the voice of younger generations are heard.”



Dr. Simon Banks

Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, Australian Government

Striving for Healthy Rivers and Healthy Communities in a Changing Climate

“This year’s *Riversymposium* theme highlights the fundamental relationship between rivers and communities and twin crises of our times: climate and biodiversity. Our water resources and rivers in Australia have had their fair share of droughts, fires and floods. The water reforms we have seen so far through the Water Initiative and Basin Plan have been monumental – a huge step forward. We have learned much in the last 13 years about how to manage water for the environment and how to achieve resilient rivers for resilient communities. But there is still more to do to manage water for the environment. We must keep adapting. We need to travel this journey to resilience together.”



Dr. Nicole Silk

Global Director for Freshwater Outcomes, The Nature Conservancy

Bending the Curve - The Promise of Durable Freshwater Protection

“The world’s biodiversity crisis is more pronounced in our rivers and freshwater ecosystems. We need to focus on the “water part” of climate change. It is important to look at both protection and restoration. We have a challenging road ahead together – we need to deliver outcomes and metrics, expand impact through policies and partnerships, connect to equity and inclusion, ignite bigger investments (innovative financial mechanisms) and accelerate integration between land and water. We need to hold each other accountable as we move forward.”



Ryan Gellert

CEO, Patagonia

Video Address to Delegates

“The Vjosa River is one of Europe’s last wild rivers. The project to create the Vjosa River National Park is unique and a great example of a three-way partnership between civil society, government and private sector to permanently protect a functioning ecosystem. To protect a river, one needs to ensure that we protect it every single day thereafter. Let us use our collective businesses to save our home planet.”

Dr. William Young, Raimund Mair and Taher Kahil

World Bank

Water Security Diagnostics - Informing Policy and Investments

“The World Bank’s Water Global Practice kicked off the Water Security Diagnostic Initiative in 2017. Eighteen water security diagnostics have been ongoing or delivered both on the country and regional levels, meeting the growing client demand for water security analytics. Water insecurity is typically driven by a combination of environmental, societal, technological, and governance factors. The most water insecure countries combine challenging hydrological environments with weak institutions and chronic under-investment in water infrastructure. Even when water is abundant and the hydrologic regime is benign, mismanagement or inadequate infrastructure investment can lead to water insecurity. As such, water security cannot be adequately assessed by any single integrative index. In addition, water security often intersects with other security issues, including energy security, food security, climate change and with national security.”



Virtual presentation by G. Asok Kumar



Taher Kahil, Raimund Mair and Dr. Nicole Silk



A Message From Ambassador Richard Sadleir

Australian Ambassador to Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia.

Welcome on behalf of Australia

“It was a pleasure to participate in a very successful, well attended and well organised event. I enjoyed all aspects of the evening with one highlight for me being the engaging presentations of the short-listed projects and the presentation and celebration of the European River Prize.”



Partner Workshops

Reforming the Water Sector and Water Management - Development Support to a Non EU Member State - Vjosa River as a Case Study

Austrian Development Agency

This workshop presented the work of a project in Albania to support reform of the water sector and water management and specifically guide development on the Vjosa River (one of the last remaining free flowing rivers in Europe).

River Restoration Networks: Championing our rivers and basins

European Centre for River Restoration, Asia River Restoration Network, UK River Restoration Centre, and the USA University of Maryland

Networks committed to river restoration in Asia, North America, Australia and Europe shared their experience in carrying out restoration and creating a platform for strengthening the world wide commitment to ensuring restoration of wetlands and river habitats.

Strengthening River Basin Governance in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

Umwelt Bundesamt, Austrian Development Agency, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, OIEau, and EU Neighbourhood

These development partners are encouraging better river basin governance and presented their program and activities in support of the countries of the Caucasus and Eastern Europe and the lessons learned in facilitating application of the knowledge provided. Persons from the region discussed the challenges faced in these countries including, limited resources, and the impacts of conflicts such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Future of River Cities

International River Foundation, IAWD, San Antonio River Authority, Port of Brisbane, and Friends of Chicago River

Case study presentations on the challenges of river cities in managing urban growth and development with consideration and attention to ensuring healthy rivers for people and communities.



Monitoring, Protecting, Restoring and Managing Rivers from a Triple Planetary Crisis Angle (Nature-Climate-Pollution)

UNEP and Rotary International

This session highlighted the work of two important international organisations (UNEP and Rotary) in promoting and supporting local communities in monitoring, protecting and restoring rivers. Examples of projects underway or completed were presented and the alliance between these two organisations to expand these efforts was presented.

Implementing Basin Management Plans and Actions for a Sustainable Future: The Role of Basin Organisations

International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, GEF, IW Learn and Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management

The role of River Basin Organisations, and the support that transboundary river basins have received to be established from GEF, has been helpful in generating progress in cooperative arrangements for river management and in developing Basin Management Plans. The role of these organisations in preparing such plans and in implementing them was explored in this workshop and the lessons learned will be used in further programs of GEF to support Transboundary cooperation.

European River Prize Finalists

International RiverFoundation and Coca Cola

Presentations from the Rivers of Cumbria and the Lakes District National Park; Mura, Drava, Danube Rivers; and the Vjosa River. Also attended by previous International, Regional and European River Prize winners and finalists, there was an atmosphere of pride, collaboration and celebration in the room.

Keepers of the Danube: 28 Years of International Danube Cooperation and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River

ICPDR, GEF, BML, ORASECOM, GIZ, NMCG, Ministry of Interior, and WWF CEE

This celebration and retrospective of the work done to create and maintain the ICPDR generated important lessons for how to successfully manage an international river basin and the support and involvement needed from international agencies such as GEF, UNDP, and World Bank, and multiple local actors and partners from organisations with an interest or involvement in the river.

Public: Private Partnerships: Cooperative of Interdisciplinary River Research Analysing Sediments and Aquatic Biodiversity

BOKU, Verbund and Via Donau

This Austrian example of river cooperation between Universities (researchers) and economic interests in rivers (hydropower, navigation and forestry) was presented in this workshop and the elements needed to make such an innovative and beneficial cooperation possible were explored and examined.

Free Flow Webinar

World Fish Migration Foundation and Wetlands International on behalf of the Dam Removal Coalition Europe

Barriers to the free flow of rivers (Dams and Weirs) are one of the most important factors undermining the health of rivers and the subsequent loss of biodiversity. This workshop session focused on efforts to remove obsolete and outdated structures in rivers and the messaging and actions to expand this effort to create an increase in the free flow of rivers in Europe and throughout the world.



Creating an Environmental Market in South East Queensland, Australia – A Case Study

Healthy Land and Water, Brisbane City Council, and Landscape Finance

Not a day goes by without the term ‘Environmental Markets’ being thrown around; but what are they, what could be achieved, how should they operate and why do we need to take this approach?

Environmental markets are market-based instruments that generate financial benefits in exchange for environmental gain. These new emerging markets provide an opportunity for private investors to participate in solving climate change and biodiversity loss – both significant environmental challenges that governments and not-for-profits cannot tackle alone.

Healthy Land and Water are working with partners to explore the benefits and opportunities in establishing an environmental market in South East Queensland. This workshop focused on the steps needed, and the initiatives undertaken, to support the creation of a future Environmental Market for SEQ.

The Role of River Basin Organisations in Sustainable Management of River Basins and the Dakar Declaration

The International Network of Basin Organisations, The Integrated Assessment Society, and Deltares

River Basin Organisations and the Regional Networks are key institutions in the work to achieve sustainable management of River Basins. What is the International Network of Basin Organizations and how can this Network further strengthen the diverse efforts worldwide to improve River Basin Management through RBO's and how can the RBO's cooperate together in providing messages to upcoming international events (Biodiversity, Climate, and Water Meetings)? Of particular importance: how can the messages of the Dakar Declaration be used to help strengthen Regional Networks of River Basin Organisations?

Key messages and actions from the River Basin Organisation Networks in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America in connection with the UN Water Events in 2023 were discussed and deliberated.

Healthy Rivers: Healthy Lives

International Joint Commission, International Rhine River Commission, and Siemens

These series of workshop presentations from key organisations focused on monitoring and ensuring the health of rivers. The presentation from the International Joint Commission focused on the chemical contamination of Beluga Whales in the St Lawrence River and the efforts to stop this pollution, the Rhine River Commission outlined innovative monitoring and assessment programs in this major European River and Siemens provided an overview of options for monitoring of water quality in a Balkan river.

Danube Hazard m3c International Workshop “Policy guidance on managing hazardous substances pollution in the Danube River Basin”

TU Wien, ICPDR, and NARW

The Danube Hazard m3c project, funded by the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme, started in July 2020. Building on the three elements of water governance (measuring, modelling and management) complemented by capacity building, it pursued the ambitious goal of paving the way for a durable and effective transnational control and reduction of hazardous substances (HS) water pollution within the Danube River Basin (DRB).

During the Symposium, the highlights of the project, its main outcomes, lessons learned and ideas for the future of hazardous substances management and policy guidance in the Danube River Basin were presented.



Financing Nature-Based Solutions for Water Security

The Nature Conservancy

This session aimed to demonstrate that Nature-Based Solutions are valuable investment options to address water security challenges and that they can be funded via a mix of revenue streams. One of the key challenges in getting such projects off the ground often relates to the need to prepare at-scale projects that can deliver noticeable impacts on the availability of water resources or water quality and attract a mix of revenue streams. After setting the stage, the session brought together actors that were working at a global scale on facilitating the mobilisation of financing for nature-based solutions for water security and climate resilience. They set out the range of tools that are available for mobilising financing and outlined how these can be accessed.

Large Scale River Conservation/Restoration Projects at the Rivers Danube and Inn, Ecological Targets and Financing Structures

Verbund

This presentation presented information about Large Scale Conservation and Restoration at Power Plants on the Danube and Inn from the Austrian Company Verbund. The company has initiated a large scale restoration and rehabilitation efforts (in some cases utilising EU funding) to improve the ecological conditions in the vicinity and along major stretches of river influenced by River Power plants.

The AWS Standard: Igniting Business Leadership in Water Stewardship

Alliance for Water Stewardship

As an organisation whose members have made a commitment to Water Stewardship, the session was intended to ignite and nurture global and local leadership in credible water stewardship that recognises and secures the social, cultural, environmental and economic value of freshwater. Positive examples of efforts to achieve credible water stewardship using the Standards of the Alliance for Water Stewardship were presented, as well as a presentation and dialogue on how to create further ignition of effort and examples of positive activities.

Crossgen

The 2022 International Riversymposium saw the launch of the Crossgen for Resilient Rivers initiative.



No Water Security — until we build Crossgen collaboration into our work. The water sector needs a culture change to introduce inclusive Crossgen leadership. We cannot hope to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals until we bring together the knowledge and lived experiences of all generations to find better solutions and deliver them rapidly and at scale. No generation can make rivers resilient by working in isolation from the other generations. Crossgen starts with a change in our attitude and mindset.

Enough Words—we need to invest in resilient river projects with Crossgen governance. While the Symposium advanced substantive discussions on river resilience, Crossgen participants noted a lack of pledges to increase investment in resilient river projects in developing economies. We want to see changes in river basin governance, where Crossgen teams can help to find better solutions and to track progress in the journey to bring our rivers from crisis to resilience.



Progress Matters—make Crossgen happen in your workplace.

Crossgen for Resilient Rivers was launched at the 25th International Riversymposium on the initiative of Global Water Partnership Southeast Asia, the Alliance for Water Stewardship in Indonesia, TransformationFirst, Asia, and Yes Everyone Matters, with support from Multi Bintang Indonesia. During IRS, participants from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and the US buddied up with fellow water leaders from a different generation and shared their experiences in three workshops.

2022 European River Prize

EUROPEAN
Riverprize

The **Rivers of Cumbria and the Lake District National Park** were awarded the 2022 European River Prize at the International Riversymposium 25th Anniversary Gala Dinner for their incredible restoration work in the Lake District, United Kingdom.

Congratulations as well to our finalists, the **Vjosa River** and the **Mura, Drava, Danube Rivers**. All three finalists have sustainably managed and accomplished amazing restoration works for their rivers, which deserve to be celebrated and commended.

Judging Panel

Prof. Bill Dennison, USA
(University of Maryland)

Bart Fokkens (European
River Restoration Network)

Dr. Eva Abal (International
RiverFoundation)



Oliver Southgate's
accepting the
award on behalf
of the Cumbrian
Rivers

Representatives of the Mura, Drava,
Danube Rivers



Representative of the Vjosa River



25th Anniversary International Riversymposium Gala Dinner



Congratulations to all the 2022 European River Prize Finalists!

To learn more about the work of our River Prize winners, [click here](#)

Alumni Network

One of the greatest assets of the International RiverFoundation is the world wide network of River Leaders. These are persons associated with finalists and winners of the Thies International Riverprize and Regional River Prizes, Twinning partners to the winners, and those awarded the Ken Thies Memorial Scholarship and Vera Thies Fellowship for Women. These river leaders have a strong affiliation and commitment to IRF and to using the Symposium and other events and activities of IRF as a forum for exchange and shared learning.

The 2022 event was no exception and the 25th year anniversary provided a number of these leaders a chance to come together (many were session speakers) and an opportunity for these River Leaders to be acknowledged during the Gala dinner at Palais Ferstel. Additionally, an online meeting of the River Leaders (who have been meeting virtually together over the past two years) was held during the Symposium. The River Leaders used this opportunity to express their commitment and interest to continue to be actively involved and support the future development of the International RiverFoundation, and have expressed their interest to have a more direct connection with the Board and staff in the planning of future activities.

But you know that when the truth is told, that it can help our rivers for the truth is gold! We're gonna make our rivers resilient before we're through!

Thank you to Prof. Bill Dennison for the lyrics of the customary IRS song this year!

WHO ATTENDED?

436

Total Delegates



17%

Business

21%

Academia



28%

NGO's & Community



105

Virtual Delegates



34%

Government



Represented
Countries



OUR GLOBAL OUTREACH AND INFLUENCE



7647

Followers



1594

Followers



1180

Followers

Testimonials

“I would like to thank all the IRS 2022 team for the good organisation and for bringing the best speakers on various subjects. It was so good to be part of those valuable views and discussions.”

Khairy Abdelrahman Ahmed, Nubian Collective Entity

“It has been my pleasure to be able to contribute to such an important event, just a few days before the COP15 and few months ahead of the UN Water Conference. Your efforts to bring together so many key partners involved in the sound management of our precious rivers cannot be praised enough.”

Veronica Manfredi, European Commission

“The experts and representatives of the IRS were excellent and the quality high. I think the size of the event was perfect to have meaningful discussions during the event and in breaks.”

Birgit Vogel, International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River

“It was an extraordinary experience to be a part of this truly international coalition of river leaders. It was humbling and profound. I thank the IRF for including me and Friends of the Chicago River, and our story of hope and change. We also truly enjoyed the new experience of a European symposium.”

Margaret Frisbie, Friends of the Chicago River

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Dedicated to a better Brisbane



Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
Climate Action, Environment,
Energy, Mobility,
Innovation and Technology

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EUROPEAN RIVER PRIZE



WELL-BEING PARTNER



WORKSHOP PARTNERS



Making it Happen

International RiverFoundation and IAWD Staff

Dr. Eva Abal | Convenor

International RiverFoundation

Philip Weller | Convenor

International Association of Water Service Companies in the Danube River Catchment (IAWD)

Jodie Bignall | CEO

International RiverFoundation

Olivia Wallace

International RiverFoundation

Walter Kling | President

IAWD

Dr. Katerina Schilling

IAWD

Emilija Milunovic

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IAWD

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Philip Weller | Director

Michael Wright | Director and Incoming Chair

Prof. Bill Dennison | Director

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Lara Vrecar

Marie Wahl

Meiqi Liu

Rebecca Tibbetts

Photographers

Wiener Wasser / Wieser

Wiener Wasser / Bohnmann

Philip Weller and Dr. Eva Abal



IAWD staff and volunteers at the registration desk



Volunteers at the registration desk



Prof. Bill Dennison at the welcome event



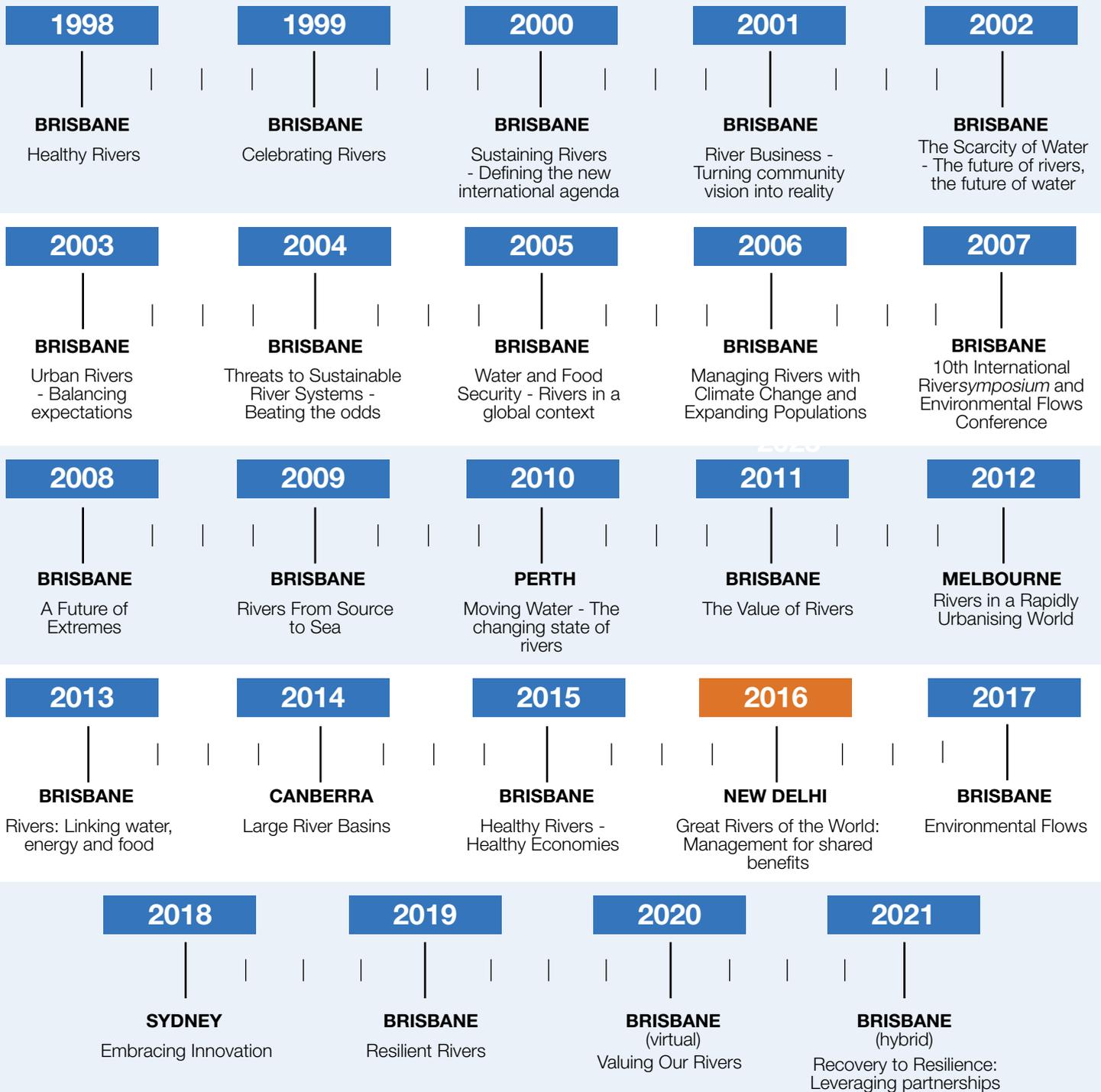
Philip Weller and Dr. Eva Abal emceeing the Gala Dinner



Riversymposium

A history of knowledge-sharing, celebration and inspiration

The IRS Journey



Riversymposium location and cycle

- **BRISBANE** once every 2 years
- **INTERNATIONAL** once every 2 years

2022

International Riversymposium Vienna, Austria

25th Anniversary of the International Riversymposium

Journey to Resilience:
Communities, climate and biodiversity

What's Next?

See you in Brisbane for the 26th International Riversymposium!



Watch Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner's closing remarks

Watch the video address from Minister Leonore Gewessler



Watch the 25th anniversary video

IRS 2022 CONTENT ACCESS

All registered delegates receive twelve months access to all of *Riversymposium's* content. This includes all keynotes, panel discussions, presentations and the sponsorship page. The video-on-demand access for the next twelve months enables delegates to take the time to explore content that they may not have had the chance to see during the actual event.

CONTACT

Jodie Bignall (Australia)
International RiverFoundation
P: +61 422 921 974
E: jodie@riverfoundation.org.au

Olivia Wallace (Australia)
International RiverFoundation
P: +61 478 796 050
E: olivia@riverfoundation.org.au

