

Austrian Danube River project wins EU\$189,000 International Thuess Riverprize

A groundbreaking Austrian river management project has won the prestigious AUD\$300,000 (EU\$189,000) International Thuess Riverprize - the world's largest prize in its field.

The Thuess Riverprize was announced at a special gala ceremony on Tuesday 4 September during the 10th International Riversymposium & Environmental Flows Conference held in Brisbane, Australia.

The Danube River project, initiated by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), was awarded the Australian-based prize for its collaborative approach to improve water quality in Europe's second longest river.

ICPDR Executive Secretary Mr Philip Weller said the prize is recognition of the work undertaken during the past 15 years to overcome political and economical obstacles.

"Hundreds of people throughout the Danube River Basin were actively involved in the ICPDR project which made the Danube River Basin a cleaner and healthier place. We are honoured by this recognition which means a great deal to the ICPDR family," Mr Weller said.

"The ICPDR project has aimed to combat the terrible environmental problems in the Danube River including toxic waste pollution and destructive farming practices brought about by the 45-year long Soviet era. Our overarching goal is to witness the rational use of water within the Danube Basin and minimise negative consequences of the 2780km Danube on the Black Sea."

Mr Weller said many countries along the Danube River are not even part of the European Union but they all agreed to cooperate and meet strict EU water protection laws, showing their commitment to integrated river basin management.

"I would like to thank all those who established and worked on the cooperation in the Danube River Basin including delegates to the ICPDR, Government representatives and non-Government organisations.

"The ICPDR will use the prize money to deliver a presentation at the International Water Association World Water Congress in Vienna in 2008. We will show other water managers the type of activities and results we experienced in the Danube River Basin which will hopefully help them in their efforts.

"The prize money will enable us to achieve our goals by ensuring communication and activities between Danube countries, stakeholder groups and NGOs remain cooperative and constructive well into the future."

ICPDR plans to organise a special celebratory event in December this year involving delegates of all Danube countries and representatives from project observer groups.

International Riversymposium Chair Professor Paul Greenfield said a total of \$3 million had been awarded to recipients of the National and International Thuess Riverprizes since it began in 1998.

"During the past nine years, 16 winners from a total of 50 finalists have been recognised for their exemplary efforts in river management," Professor Greenfield said.

"As we move into a world of increasing complexity and uncertainty around water security I am convinced those who develop and refine the knowledge and approaches for protecting, restoring and sustainably managing river systems, will become our water heroes," he said.

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“They are the global vanguards who have remained committed for many years to maintaining and rebuilding the health of rivers world wide.”

The Danube project was chosen over three other outstanding Government and community groups from China, New Zealand and Canada.

The International Thiess Riverprize is a partnership between the International Riverfoundation and *Riverfestival*, an annual 10 day celebration of Brisbane’s river, people, culture and environment. The prize money is funded by the International Riverfoundation and the awards are managed by *Riverfestival*.

More information on the International Thiess Riverprize can be found at www.riversymposium.com.

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**Interviews are available with Mr Gyula Hollo, Head of the Hungarian Delegation to the ICPDR.
Additional information and images are available upon request.**

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