

# LIFE RESTORE FOR MDD

UNESCO Five-country  
Biosphere Reserve  
Mura-Drava-Danube

## DRAVA FOREST-PARK VARAŽDIN, CROATIA

The Drava forest-park covers an area of approximately 85.74 hectares along the Drava River, near the city of Varaždin. It is part of the Mura – Drava Regional Park and the Natura 2000 ecological network (SPA HR1000013 Drava Reservoirs and SCI HR2001307 Drava Reservoirs), as well as an important segment of the UNESCO Five-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube (TBR MDD).

This floodplain forest-park is home to protected and rare species and includes the priority habitat type 91E0\* – alluvial forests. Despite its high natural value, the habitat is increasingly under pressure due to the spread of invasive alien plant species, the regulated river flow and the loss of natural floodplain dynamics.

### ALLUVIAL FORESTS (HT 91E0\* - PRIORITY HABITAT)

This habitat type consists of diverse alluvial forests, mainly along rivers and streams. These forests are characterized by trees such as White willow (*Salix Alba*), Black poplar (*Populus nigra*), White poplar (*Populus alba*), Black alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*).



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## FACTSHEET

### LOCATION OF ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION:

- **Country:** Croatia
- **Site:** Drava forest-park, Varaždin
- **Area:** 85.74 ha
- **Protection status:** Forest-park, part of the Mura-Drava Regional Park
- **Ecological network:** Natura 2000 site (SPA HR1000013 Drava Reservoirs and SCI HR2001307 Drava Reservoirs)
- **UNESCO designation:** five-country biosphere reserve Mura-Drava-Danube

English oak (*Quercus robur*) may also occur locally within this habitat type.

All types occur on soils, which are periodically flooded, nutrient-rich and well drained. Alluvial forests are crucial for biodiversity as they provide habitats for a wide range of species, especially birds, amphibians, insects, and a variety of seasonal plants.



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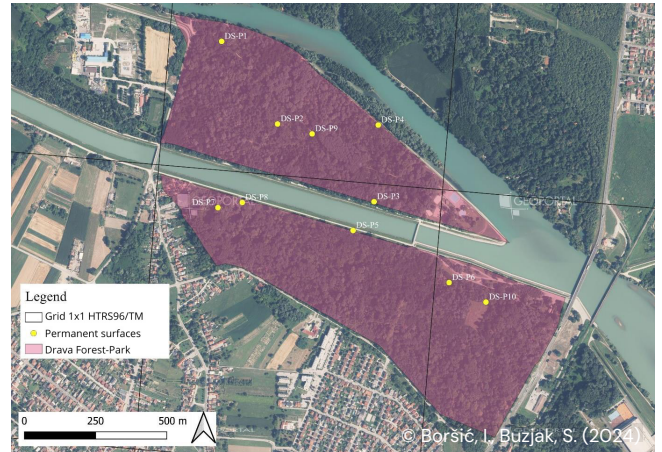
# PLANNED RESTORATION ACTIONS

## RESTORATION OF FOREST HABITATS

As part of the LIFE RESTORE for MDD project (2023 – 2028), targeted conservation and restoration measures are being implemented in the Drava forest-park.

The main activities involve mechanical removal of invasive alien plant species such as Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), goldenrod (*Solidago sp.*), and cutleaf coneflower (*Rudbeckia laciniata*), which show negative impact on natural habitats.

Permanent plots have been established to enable long-term monitoring of restoration effects. The goal is to establish stable and functional forest ecosystems that are more resilient to invasive species and climate change, in line with EU nature conservation standards.



Locations of permanent plots for monitoring invasive alien plant species (IAS) in the Drava forest-park in Varaždin.

## THREE RIVERS, FIVE COUNTRIES, ONE PROJECT

The “LIFE RESTORE for MDD” project is a joint initiative of Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, and Serbia, aimed at preserving and restoring the largest connected floodplain forests within the transboundary UNESCO Five-country Biosphere Reserve Mura–Drava–Danube.

The project is co-funded by the European Union’s LIFE Programme (67%) and runs for five years, starting on October 1, 2023. With a total budget of €20,024,000 it is being implemented by 17 partners from all five countries.

## WHO IS IMPLEMENTING THE RESTORATION MEASURES?

Restoration activities in the Drava forest-park are carried out by the Public Institution for the Management of Protected Natural Areas of Varaždin County (JU ZDP VŽ). Initial field research and mapping of invasive plant species were conducted in 2024 and serve as the basis for planning and monitoring the implementation. The work is part of the cross-border project LIFE RESTORE for MDD, which brings together 17 partners from Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, and Serbia.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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## PARTNERS



## CO-FINANCING

