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Water body type of the year: rocky lime-poor highland river

UBA: Another 15 percent of this type to achieve 'good' status by 2015

The 2011 water body type of the year, which experts refer to as “Small coarse substrate-dominated siliceous highland river (type 5), is most worthy of our attention, as its more than 18,000-km of waterways are the most common water body type in Germany. It winds its way throughout the German Central Uplands at altitudes ranging from 250-1,000 metres- through the Harz, Thuringian Forest, Bavarian Forest, Ore Mountains, the Franconian and Black Forests, and the Rhenish Slate Range. When the waterway is in good health it is host to caddisflies, stoneflies, mayflies, and many other aquatic insects. They feed on the algal growth on rocks as well as leaf and wood residues in the water. The aquatic insects themselves provide food for brown trout, the common bullhead, loach, and other fish.

However, the award-winner needs our help. Barely 20 percent of rocky, lime-poor highland rivers in Germany currently are in an ecological condition rated ‘very good’ or ‘good’. On the other hand, 43 percent are in ‘average’ condition; 27 percent are rated ‘unsatisfactory’, and yet another 10 percent even rate ‘poor’. Water effort protection efforts aim to recoup the ‘good’ status of another 15 percent of mountainous streams. To do this, the waterways must have more lateral space available to them, weirs must be dismantled, and trees and shrubs must be planted on their banks. Fewer nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphate must be discharged into streams from sewage treatment facilities and fields.

The new “Water Body of the Year” campaign, launched in 2011, is how UBA is seeking to raise awareness of water bodies as they deserve special attention on account of their widespread presence, properties, uses, condition, and more notably, their risk potential. In addition to this year’s winner, there are another 50 other types of river, lake, transitional and coastal waters. Bodies of water are diverse and ecologically valuable habitats that play a key role in the ecosystem. Water bodies aid in the distribution of species, and thanks to their assimilative capacity, provide clean water to mankind, animals and plants.

More information on the Gewässertyp des Jahres 2011 campaign, including interactive map is here: <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/wasser/gewaessertyp/2011/index.htm>

To order or download more information about the campaign see:

Poster: <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien-e/4080.html>

Flyer: <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien-e/4079.html>

Dessau-Roßlau, 21 March 2011