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Lower Danube – GES or GEP?

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Brussels, HMWB workshop, 12 March 2009



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Lower Danube - facts



1. The last free flowing river section downstream Iron Gates



2. The last section in the Danube Basin still used by sturgeons for spawning and migration



3. Lower Danube still sustains biodiversity:
3 Biosphere Reserves, 15 National & Natural Parks, 255 Nature reserves,
235 Natura 2000 sites



Are LD water bodies HM? ⁽¹⁾

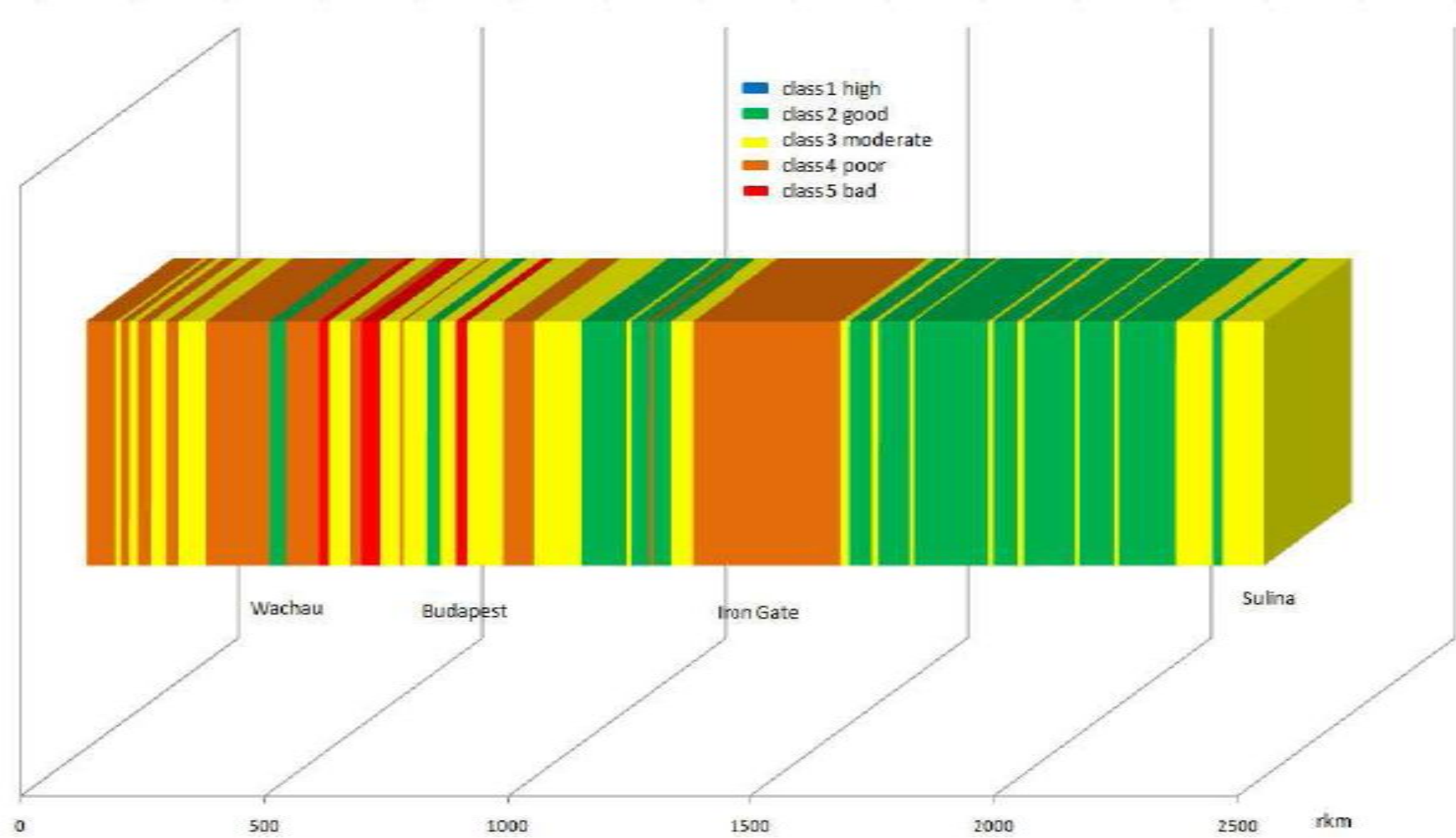
Lower Danube Romania: 5 Water Bodies (2 finally and 3 provisionally designated as HMWB) (source Draft Danube MP, 2009)

Criteria used for provisional designation of HMWB should be biologically validated using best available information.

For the Lower Danube:

- insufficient data (mainly TNMN results from 2007 and JDS2 for chemical status only)
- biological elements used are fish fauna, macroinvertebrates and phytoplankton – still preliminary data, high uncertainty of the ecological status (low confidence and precision)
- Reference conditions – not clearly defined (often referred to conditions from 1950, especially for floodplain and less for the river)







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Therefore,

- the link between hydromorphological alterations (*causing significant changes in character*) and the biological quality elements is not supported by data resulted from sound monitoring or detailed studies on correlations between pressures and their impact
- Expert judgment should not be used as the singular argument to designate HMWB when biological data is not available or insufficient
- There are no arguments to support potential negative effects of the restoration measures on the benefits determined by hydromorphological alteration (navigation, flood protection)





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GES/Restoration vs. GEP/Mitigation

- Lower Danube WBs are at risk of failing GES mainly due to hydromorphological alterations but are not qualifying for final designation as HMWBs
- Technically feasible and not disproportionately expensive restoration measures exists and could lead to win-win situations for environment and economic uses (e.g. flood risk management, navigation)
- Restoration could enhance habitats quality, thus biodiversity in the Protected areas along Lower Danube
- Synergies with other policies could be used to help deliver restoration objectives (e.g. agricultural practices, biodiversity conservation)





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Recommendations

- Consider the hierarchy „protection – restoration - mitigation, in actions and measures taken
- Preventing ecosystems deterioration should be the primary objective
- Detailed studies on hydromorphological reference conditions and impacts (taking also into consideration issues like sediments and climate change) are essential
- Restoration/mitigation measures proposed in the PoM should be based on best current knowledge of ecological effectiveness
- Impact of new projects/plans should be considered





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Danube, a living river, a river of life!

Thank you for your attention!