LIFE Platform meeting
FOCUS ON WATER RESILIENCE STRATEGY

LIFE Strategic Integrated Projects implementing River Basin Management Plans practices

PLENARY presentations

Mari Sepp

14-15 October 2025

Brussels

This meeting is organised by

Project title: LIFE IP CleanEST

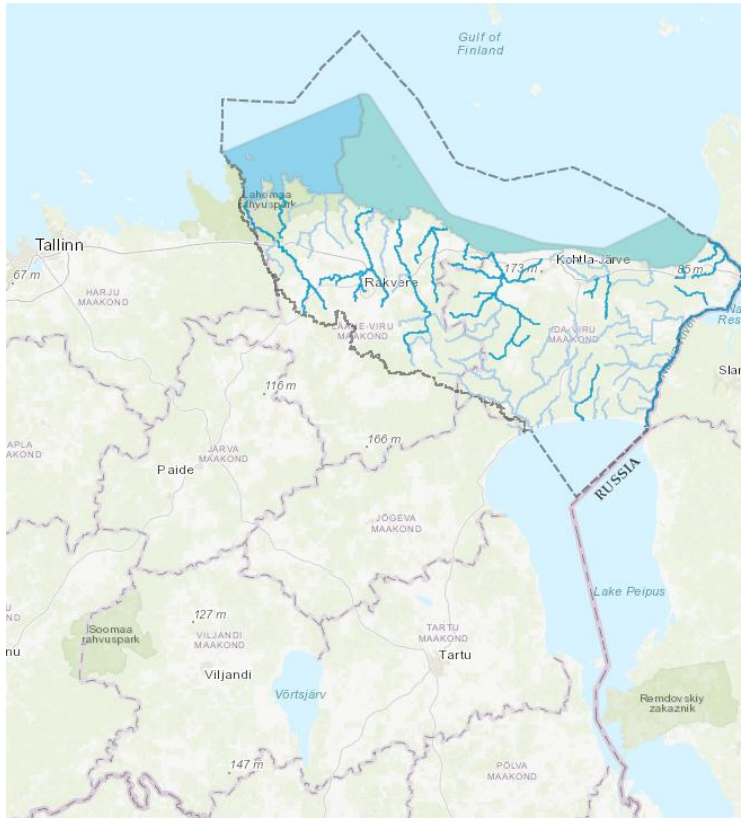
RBMP targeted: East-Estonian RBMP

Project location: Viru sub-basin

Total Budget: € 16,666,600 %

Start and end dates: 01.01.2019 – 31.12.2028

Coordinator: Ministry of Climate of Estonia



- **Beneficiaries (23):**
- Public Enablers (9): Environment Agency, Environmental Research Centre, Ministry of Climate Infotechnology Centre, Land and Space Board, Centre of Rural Research and Knowledge, National Broadcasting, National Forest Centre, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Geology Service,
- Academies (2): Tallinn Technical University, University of Life Sciences
- NGO's (4): Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce, Rivers Trust, Science Centre AHHAA, Union of Ida-Viru municipalities
- Municipalities (7): Kadrina, Viru-Nigula, Lüganuse, Vinni, Alutaguse, Narva City, Rakvere City.

REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
MINISTRY OF CLIMATE

Project title: LIFE SIP WetEST

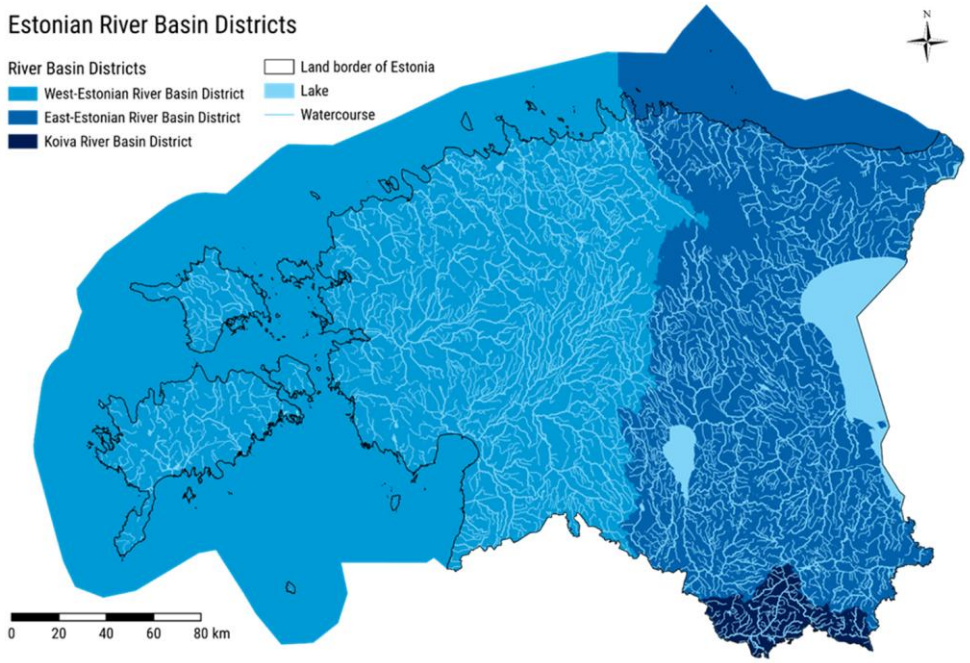
RBMP targeted: West-Estonian RBMP

PROJECT LOCATION: West-Estonian River Basin Dist

Total Budget: € 29,871,937

DURATION: 01.01.2025 – 31.12.2033

Coordinator: Ministry of Climate of Estonia



Beneficiaries (17):

- Leaders (3): Ministry of Climate, Environmental Board, Environmental Investment Centre
- Public Enablers (6): Environment Agency, Environmental Research Centre, Ministry of Climate Infotechnology Centre, Land and Space Board, Centre of Rural Research and Knowledge, National Broadcasting
- Academies (4): Tallinn Technical University, University of Tartu, Tallinn University, University of Life Sciences
- NGO's (4): Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce, Baltic Environmental Forum, Wildlife Estonia, Environmental Law Centre

REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
MINISTRY OF CLIMATE

SIGNIFICANT PRESSURES ARE CAUSING TO FAIL GOOD STATUS OF WATERBODIES IN WEST-ESTONIAN AND EAST-ESTONIAN RIVER BASIN DISTRICT

- Water Smart rural development in pilot catchments
- Advancing melioration practices
- Remediation treatment of shallow lakes and bays
- Upscaling pollutant control

GOVERNANCE

MINDSET SHIFT

BROAD UPTAKE OF PROJECT RESULTS

2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
III			IV					

LIFE SIP WetEST RBMP cycles

CAPACITY BUILDING

RISING AWARENESS

REPLICATION

- Residual pollution
- Diffuse pollution from agriculture
- Hydromorphological aternations - migration barriers, restoration of riverine habitats
- Local sewage water systems

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
II			III						IV

LIFE IP CleanEST RBMP cycles

Upscaling pollutant control in LIFE SIP WetEST project

- Update decision support system for hazardous pollutants control and environmental permitting

- Develop comprehensive approaches to minimise the transfer of pollutants from waste management sites, landfills and urban areas to the aquatic environment.

- Review and harmonise best practices for reducing environmental emissions of Persistent Organic Pollutants

- Determine the actual scale of Persistent Organic Pollutants emissions in West-Estonian basin.

LIFE IP CleanEST case study: Restoration of a historically polluted and dam-impacted river

- Pollution legacy over a century
- Complex environmental problems in one catchment area
- Different interests and stakeholder groups
- Variety of different communication methods
- Different financing mechanisms

Removing the residual pollution from River Erra

Period 2021 - 2023

16 000 m3 of polluted soil was removed

1000 tons of contaminated soil were treated by thermal desorption method

2,1 km of riverbed was cleaned

Cost 1,9 million euros

Hazardous pollution sources were eliminated or the risk of further contamination from them was reduced

The status Erra river after the remediation

- Polyaromatic hydrocarbons and oil products trend shows improvement
- Contradictory acute toxity results
- Follow-up: evaluation of ecosystem services



Removal of river dam from Purtse river

Preparation 2019 – 2024

Work period 2024 – 2025

Cost 650 000 euros

Fish population assessments indicate that

over 1,000 salmon

and

more than 1,400 trout

may spawn annually in areas upstream of the dam.

Communication, engagement, events

Contribution to Lüganuse Municipality's Growth

Collaborative Network

Project team, municipality, community, entrepreneurs, and media worked together as equals

Community engagement

Community leaders mobilized even hesitant members

Infrastructure investment

Municipality added funding to the road construction

Future development

The municipality is acquiring new resources to develop residential areas and leisure opportunities

Smart Fish Pass

Enables fish migration and allows water abstraction, if needed


RBMP as connection between regulative documents and project activities
Piloting, conclusions, replications
Studies and pilot projects transferable to other funding sources
Time and resource for stakeholder engagement
Influencing behaviour through long-term consistent communication
Follow-up actions at local level initiated by the municipality
LIFE PROJECT AS A CENTRE OF SOLVING COMPLEX PROBLEMS

Future challenges

Learning from past miskates

- Todays actions may have unseen impacts on water
- Futue generations might need to repair the damage
- What are we overlooking now?

Climate change dilemmas

- Restore the nature: remove dams for natural flow
- Manage extremes: build dams for droughts and floods
- Which path supports long-term resiliance?

Prevention or reaction

- Prevention is ideal
- But is reacting sometimes more effective?
- When does it makse sense to respond than prevent?