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EAA release:

Input to the informal meeting of the Ministers of Environment and ministerial water conference, Bucharest, 20-22 May 2019

The European Anglers Alliance (EAA) together with European Rivers Network, European Environmental Bureau, Wetlands International and WWF (i.e. the [Living Rivers Europe](#) coalition) submitted yesterday a [letter to the ministers](#) with views on some of the issues on the agenda of the forthcoming informal meeting of the Ministers of Environment and the ministerial water conference in Bucharest on 20-22 May 2019.

The ministers are urged to support maintaining the high level of ambition and the environmental objectives set in the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and step up the efforts in the next river basin management cycle in 2021-2027 to bring our rivers, lakes and wetlands to the desired ecological state by 2027.

The urgency to protect and restore our freshwater ecosystems and bend the curve of freshwater biodiversity loss has recently been highlighted in the [global assessment report](#) by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) which concluded that freshwater ecosystems are showing the highest rate of decline.

Furthermore, as most marine litter, and much of the chemical pollution of the seas are brought by the rivers, also the seas will suffer if the WFD is not properly implemented, making it difficult, or impossible, to reach the 'Good Environmental Status' target set by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Coincidentally, today the European Environment Agency published a press release "[Contamination of European seas continues despite some positive progress](#)".

Unsustainable industries, including industrial agriculture, hydropower, and coal mining, are lobbying for devastating changes to the EU water law [the WFD]. A new paper [WEAKENING THE EU WATER LAW: INDUSTRY'S WISH LIST](#) and a [media release](#) by *Living Rivers Europe* shows that, if ever put into effect, such changes would give these sectors the green light to undertake even more destructive activities, potentially causing havoc on our rivers and lakes. But, far from obliging these sectors to clean up their act, some Member States have compiled a strikingly similar wish list, raising serious questions as to where their true interests lie.

- "Biodiversity – the diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems – is declining faster than at any time in human history. And the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world now likely, warns a landmark new report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). More than half of our rivers are not in a healthy state as required by the Water Framework Directive. If our rivers are not brought into a healthy state the decline in biodiversity cannot be turned around. Strong forces want more hydropower plants in our rivers, which is bizarre. Those plants in place are having a devastating impact on the rivers and the life – or lack of life – in and around the rivers. More hydropower plants will deliver a negligible amount of electricity but deprive life and biodiversity", said Mark Owen, Freshwater Policy Specialist at the EAA.

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Notes to the editor:

- According to the “one-out, all-out principle”, a water body (such as a river, lake or wetland) is only considered healthy if all the quality elements (for example the flow, whether it is biodiversity-rich, whether there are chemical substances) are in good status, and the overall status is defined by the quality element in the lowest class.
- Within the Water Framework Directive, Member States must ensure that the current state of any given water body does not deteriorate any further.
- Officials from several Member States have drafted a paper on the Future of the EU Water Policy for the meeting of EU Water Directors in November 2018. The paper put forward several amendments to the WFD.
- [“EU clean water laws under attack from industry lobbyists”](#); The Guardian, 15 May 2019

About the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD)

The WFD is one of the EU’s most progressive pieces of environmental legislation. It requires the protection, enhancement and restoration of our rivers, wetlands, lakes and coastal waters. Under the WFD, EU governments have committed to ensure no deterioration and achieve good status for the vast majority of all water bodies by 2015, and at the very latest by 2027.

The WFD requires Member States to aim to achieve at least good status in each water body within their river basin districts. Each Member State must produce a plan for each of the river basin districts within its territory. Member States should also coordinate the preparation of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) for international river basin districts (iRBDs).

Plans must include objectives for each water body, reasons for not achieving objectives where relevant, and the programme of measures required to meet the objectives.

In line with the WFD, the European Commission is required to publish a report on the implementation of the Directive every six years. The report has to include among other things a review of progress in the implementation of the Directive and a survey of the RBMPs submitted in accordance with Article 15, including suggestions for the improvement of future plans. First reports assessing RBMPs were published by the Commission in 2012; this report looks at 2nd cycle of River Basin Management Plans (2015-2021). The Commission at the same time also published a report on the implementation of Floods Directive (FD), assessing flood risk management plans (FRMPs), member states were required to submit in 2015. Where implemented, the WFD has proved to be effective in achieving its goals of good water status and non-deterioration, successfully balancing environmental, social and economic requirements. The WFD is currently undergoing its standard review in the form of a ‘fitness check’. Every piece of EU legislation goes through this process. The fitness check will look at the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value of the WFD (and its ‘daughter’ directives) and the Floods Directive. It includes the ongoing stakeholder consultation and public consultation.

Notes to editors:

The European Anglers Alliance, EAA is a pan-European NGO for recreational angling, which promotes and defends European recreational anglers’ interests at the European level and beyond. There are about 3 million affiliated members to EAA’s 16 member organisations and associates from 14 European nations. EAA is a member of or observer to a number of committees and councils involved with EU’s fisheries and environment policy shaping and implementation
