

Restoring habitats of the endangered river mussel in Germany



Project Duration: 1 year

The Schnegäer Mühlenbach, a stream in Lower Saxony, Germany, is one of the last habitats of the endangered thick-shelled river mussel. EKOenergy paid 21,000 € to BUND Friends of the Earth Germany to support their conservation.

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Photo: BUND Niedersachsen

The thick-shelled river mussel (*Unio crassus*) was formerly the most common river mussel in Central Europe. Nowadays it's critically endangered, especially in Germany.

The mussel requires clean and structurally diverse water bodies. To reproduce, they also need a brown trout population because their larvae develop as a parasite in the brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) gill tissue.

Due to historic straightening measures at different parts of the stream, the flow and width of the stream is not very diverse. In addition, sediment accumulation due to runoff from the surrounding farmland threatens the natural riverbed structure and has destroyed spawning grounds.

EKOenergy's Environmental Fund donated 21,000 € to finance a habitat restoration project run by BUND Friends of the Earth Germany. The project aims to reconnect an old meander to the main stream, creating a habitat suitable for mussel reproduction.

The reconnection of the formerly cut-off meander at the Schnegäer Mühlenbach

was implemented in summer 2018. "In earlier times, there was a mill at the end of the meander. The river was straightened so that the water would flow faster into the mill wheel", explains Petra Bernardy, biologist and project organizer at BUND.

Stones and gravel were inserted to diversify the flow and morphology of the river. As the meander flows through a forest instead of nearby fields, this reduces the amount sediment build up in the river.



A dynamic flow with ripples and pools is favoured by mussels and brown trout. Otters (*Lutrinae sp.*), European crayfish (*Astacus astacus*) and river dragonflies also live in the stream. Additionally, close to the river, there's a high population of the rare fire salamander (*Salamandra salamandra*). These will all benefit from the restoration measures too.

The mussel and trout populations will be closely monitored for years to come. "I believe that we can facilitate the spreading of the river mussel by naturalisation measures at the Schnegäer Mühlenbach stream", Petra Bernardy reflects optimistically.

ENVIRONMENTAL FUND



EKOenergy funds river restoration projects annually



Projects implemented by trustworthy local organisations



Projects selected by independent jury of experts



In 2018, EKOenergy donated 130,000 € to 7 projects



Funding comes from sales of EKOenergy ecolabeled hydro-power

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Sustainability criteria: additional value for our planet

	EKOenergy	Other renewable	Mixed sources
New renewable energy production via our Climate Fund	✓	?	-
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Wind power outside bird and nature areas	✓	?	-
Hydropower takes into account migratory fish.	✓	?	-
River restoration projects via our Environmental Fund .			
Renewable energy tracked by GOs, RECs, I-RECs	✓	✓	-
Wind, solar, hydro, geothermal, bioenergy	✓	✓	?
Fossil fuels, nuclear, possibly renewables	-	-	✓

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