



Press Release  
For immediate Publication

## **Give Sasyk back to the sea!**

### **Massive action at the Black Sea for re-naturalizing of Lake Sasyk by decommissioning the dam on August 24**

WECF, Women in Europe for a Common Future, supports its Ukrainian partner Vozrozhdenye in its struggle for a healthy environment for all

Around 30 years ago Tatarbunary, in the Odessa region of Ukraine was a health resort, thanks to the curative qualities of the nearby Sasyk Bay. Today Sasyk is a dangerous place to visit. In the late seventies the Soviets closed the estuary of Sasyk of from the Black Sea by a dam.

#### **Ecological disaster**

Sasyk is an estuary in the north-western Black Sea, with the status of a wetland (VBU) of international importance and Ramsar status. The idea was to create a new lake that was supposed to provide irrigation for the surrounding villages. The lake remained salty and the ecosystem toppled. The project ended in a ecological, social and economical disaster. The environment and as a consequence, the health conditions of the population have alarmingly deteriorated. Despite having no function at all, the dam is still not decommissioned, due to corruption and ignorance of the responsible authorities.

#### **Vozhrazhdenyia (revival)**

The non-governmental organisation Vozrozhdenye (Revival) has been campaigning for more than 12 years to get the dam decommissioned. WECF as its networkpartner and as an international Women's and Environmental Organisation working in the region fully supports Vozhrazhdenyia in its campaign. The deterioration of the bay has not only had effect on health and biodiversity, but has also had an enormous socio economic impact on the population. Tourism in the region disappeared and the formerly popular beach at the lake cannot be commercially exploited anymore.

#### **Return Sasyk to the Sea**

The effects can be reversed by decommissioning the dam, as has been sufficiently thoroughly researched by numerous scientists. According to a survey carried out by the organization, 97 % of the population is in favour of opening the dam.

Vozhrazhdenyie is preparing a peaceful action on the Sasyk dam: 'Return Sasyk to the Sea', on August 24, in order to enforce the decommissioning of the dam.

## **WECF**

WECF is a network of 100 organizations in Western and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia working on sustainable development, health and environment and poverty reduction. Its main mission is to achieve a Healthy Environment for All.

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[www.wecf.eu/english/articles/2008/06/sasyk-health.php](http://www.wecf.eu/english/articles/2008/06/sasyk-health.php)

### **Press Release by Vozrozhdenye:**

#### **Sasyk Press tour**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of August in the framework of the civil campaign "Return Sasyk back to the Sea" a press tour for mass media in Ukraine was organized by the WECF partner "Vozrozhdeniye" (Revival).

Lake Sasyk, 208 square kilometer in size, lies between the deltas of the Danube and Dniester rivers in Odessa oblast, Ukraine. In the late 70's the Soviets started a big agro-industrial project by cutting of the bay from the Black Sea with a 14 km long dam to irrigate the surrounding agricultural area. A few years after the project was completed, the negative effects became visible. Sasyk has turned into an ecological and social disaster zone. The morbidity in the area has increased dramatically.

During the organized press tour more than 15 journalists from Ukrainian and foreign mass media as well as representatives of villages, local NGOs, environmental and scientific institutions visited the areas of this environmental disaster.

Participants of the tour visited the former mud-health centre in the village Borisovka, Sasyk-Danube Channel, irrigation systems, that are not functioning any more but are still financed from the state budget, as well as resort "Katranka" negative influenced by water problems and village Liman. In the village Liman participants tasted the water from the local wells that is used by villagers for drinking despite of a high contamination.

At the dam separating Sasyk from the sea a symbolic action took place: the soil from the dam was collected and packed in the small parcels to be sent to Ukrainian politicians as a reminder of a disaster and their promises to solve this environmental problem.

Such parcels were sent to the Ukrainian President, Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition and local authorities responsible for water management.

The press tour was organized by financial support of WECF, private donors A. Palarijeva, Natalia Richardson (Canada) and volunteers from villages.

