Riverine Ecosystems Health Project of Iraqi Kurdistan

Waterkeepers Iraq receives funds from the Rufford Small Grants Foundation for a River Ecosystem Health Project to look at threats from gravel mines and dams.

The era of large, modern dams on our rivers began in the mid-1900s as the country sought complete control of water resources for agriculture, to generate power, and to prevent flooding in Baghdad. These dams have been promoted as good for the development of our country.

The many tributary rivers and streams that flow through Kurdistan and feed the Tigris River have flowed free and unchained since before recorded history. Rivers are the veins of our country and when large dams are built, they cut up the rivers unnaturally.

We need to evaluate carefully whether these large projects are really necessary and try to understand whether the benefits really outweigh the long-term costs before it is too late for our rivers.

All over the world and even closer to home, people are protesting and saying no to large dam projects. From the Ilisu and Cizre Dam projects in Turkey, to the Belo Monte Dam in Brazil, people are coming together to question the need for projects that have so many negative impacts. In other parts of the U.S., Latin America and Europe, people are now starting to remove dams to try and restore their river ecosystems.

There are winners and there are losers and these dams projects have both good and bad effects that need to be fully considered.