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.

In-Stream Gravel Mining has been done in Kurdistan, as elsewhere in the world, because the gravel in rivers is easy and cheap to access. But if it is done improperly it can transform fertile farmland and riverside woodlands into a forever barren landscape and damage the river’s health, water quality and biological diversity.

We have so many gravel mines in our rivers that they never have an opportunity to recover. We just see our river forests destroyed, our farmlands eroding away, our water quality declining and fewer fish and other animals that depend upon healthy rivers.

Kurdistan is blessed with an abundance of rivers and streams. But many of our rivers have been damaged each year by a practice that’s been accepted for decades.

Gravel is important in our economy and is used in cement to literally build our cities. But there are proven ways to mine that better protect our rivers, such as dryland gravel mining away from rivers or at least not mining directly in the river itself ... And if there is no other option, than we must reclaim and restore the river after mining is done.