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## Advanced river flow management vital to facing climate challenge

**Stockholm, Sweden, 16 August, 2009 (IUCN)** – Improved river flow management will be vital to protecting communities from the worst impacts of climate change and to achieving international goals on poverty reduction, according to a new report issued on the eve of World Water Week.

*Securing Water for Ecosystems and Human Well-being: The Importance of Environmental Flows* finds that river flow management to meet diverse environmental and human needs should be funded through appropriate valuation of the ecosystem services provided by healthy rivers. These include maintenance of groundwater levels, flood and drought mitigation, and contributions to human livelihoods, nutrition and health.

The report developed in collaboration between major global institutions - including the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), Swedish Water House, UNESCO-IHE, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), UNEP- DHI, Deltares and NGOs such as WWF, Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy- draws on the latest research and practices on environmental flows and their significance.

*“Initially the emphasis in environmental flows was on the amount of water released down rivers,”* said one of the report’s lead authors, **Dr Birgitta Malm Renöfält**, cluster group leader at Swedish Water House.

*“Now we recognize the importance of different flow levels and the timing of flows to different river functions and understand that maintaining a healthy functioning ecosystem requires much more sophisticated river management. For example, base flows are vital to surrounding water table levels and soil moisture levels, pulse flows shape the character of river channels and large floods replenish nutrients and recharge aquifers over wider areas.”*

The report documents sensitive infrastructure development and operation, as well as appropriate environmental flow management benefits for health and livelihoods in Kenya, Tanzania, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Iran and the Sudan.

With water availability expected to be one of the major and most severe impacts of climate change in many areas of the world, sufficient and equitable allocation of water will become more and more vital for both people and nature.

*“The environmental community has critical tools to offer for climate change adaptation, and environmental flow regulation is an important part of the climate adaptation toolbox,”* said **Dr Mark Smith**, Head of the IUCN Water Programme.

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#### About IUCN

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IUCN works on biodiversity, climate change, energy, human livelihoods and greening the world economy by supporting scientific research, managing field projects all over the world, and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,000 government and NGO members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 staff in 60 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

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