First Global Freshwater Biodiversity Atlas Online - Launch

News

Date

29 January 2014

Location

Brussels, Belgium

The first online, freely available atlas of freshwater biodiversity was launched on January 29 at the landmark Science Policy Symposium for Freshwater Life "Water Lives: new scientific horizons for biodiversity and water policy", which brought together European Union policy makers and freshwater scientists. The scientific information platform was created to support the protection and sustainable management of inland waters as an output of BioFresh, and EU-funded project in which Ecologic Institute participates.

Protection of freshwater life

Freshwaters belong to the most species diverse habitats in the world. Although they cover less than 1% of the Earth's surface, they are home to 35% of all vertebrate species! Sadly, freshwater life is declining at a rate faster than any other component of global biodiversity. A challenge for policy is thus how to integrate the protection of freshwater life and the ecosystem services it provides with real and pressing demands on freshwater resources from the energy, food and sanitation sectors.

Gateway to key geographical information

The Atlas is a response from freshwater scientists to this policy challenge. It provides policy-makers, water managers and scientists with an online, open-access and interactive gateway to key geographical information and spatial data on freshwater biodiversity across different scales. The Atlas serves as a resource for better evidenced-based decision making in the area of water policy, science and management.

The online Atlas adopts a book-like structure, which allows for easy browsing through its four thematic chapters on:

1. Patterns of freshwater biodiversity
2. Freshwater resources and ecosystems
3. Pressures on freshwater systems and
4. Conservation and management

All of the maps are accompanied by a short article with further contextual background information. The interactive map interface facilitates easy switching between maps, navigation, zooming and the display of information attached to each map feature. Also,

unlike a conventional printed atlas, this online Atlas can be continually expanded and updated as new maps and data become available.

Duration

29 January 2014

Project

Biodiversity of Freshwater Ecosystems: Status, Trends, Pressures, and Conservation Priorities (BioFresh)

Keywords

Biodiversity
Water
freshwater, biodiversity, sustainable management of inland waters, BioFresh, ecosystem services, key geographical information
online atlas, scientific information platform, interactive gateway

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