PERSPECTIVES ON RESILIENT AND BALANCED WATER AVAILABILITY IN THE MEUSE RIVER BASIN

IMPACTS OF THE 2026 DROUGHT

Add your concern

Add your perceived impact

Cyanobacteria developed

The province and Waterschap **Limburg** opened a **EUR 2.4 million** subsidy scheme for on-farm **drought-adaptation measures** such as buffer strips and drainage ditches, to protect fields against drought and reduce runoff [Provincie Limburg]

Increased salinity

A **total ban on water abstraction** from non-navigable streams and ditches and an appeal to cut groundwater use, warning irreversible damage to trees and protected nature [Waterschap Limburg]

The ban was only for surface water. There is no policy/ groundwater ban (yet)

Approximately **70% of groundwater monitoring points remained low to extremely low** for the season

Temporary **abstraction bans** on nearly all non-navigable watercourses, **lock restrictions**, **additional pumping**, **cyanobacteria restrictions** on captation and **recreation** at various waterways [Flemish Drought Commission]

Restrictions in water use by farmers, but also municipalities and other functions in recreation

Shorter intake

Water temperatures in the **Roer** River had risen **above 25°C**, presenting an **immediate threat of thermal shock to cold-water fish like salmon and brown trout** [Waterschap Limburg]

An **80% reduction has been imposed on water withdraws** from the Albert Canal and the Kempen canals **for agriculture and nature**. [vlaamsewaterweg.be]

The largest historical wildfire in Belgium's Hautes Fagnes near Baelen burned about **3,000 hectares**, prompting a large emergency response with international support [Wallonie.be]

The Rursee reservoir has dropped to 61.8% of capacity [wver.de]

just a little bit under normal :)

Sambre navigation draft restriction, forcing reduced cargo loads for barges, until 26 August [RTBF/ Wallonie.be]

Lacs de Butgenbach and Robertville are **banned for recreational use** because of a **fire-contamination risk stemming** from the mid-August Hautes-Fagnes wildfire [Wallonie.be]

20 communes (including Chimay, Bouillon and Rochefort) are now under drinking-**water use restrictions**, up from just 7 in July [Wallonie.be]

Upper Meuse forecast signals prolonged autumn drought

Vielsalm and Stavelot needed about **ten water-tanker deliveries a day** to keep their water towers supplied, because the underlying **schist bedrock cannot build seasonal groundwater reserves to meet summer demand** [SWDE.be]

Both **Chooz nuclear reactors** were **shut down** by July-August as EDF honoured the 1998 Franco-Belgian treaty guaranteeing minimum Meuse flow for downstream users [EDF.fr]

The Ourthe at Hotton is **closed to bathers** because of **water-quality** concerns. Eight young people were hospitalised after swimming in the Ourthe river in Vieuxville [Wallonie.be/ Brusselstimes]

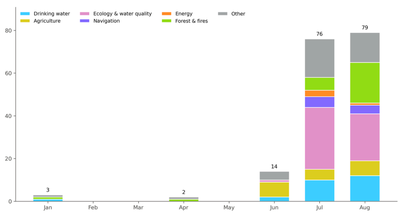
Micro-hydroelectric plants on non-navigable waterways (outside major dams) ordered **shut down to preserve minimal ecological flow** [Wallonie.be]

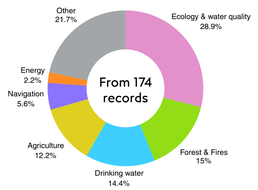
Aquifer levels **below seasonal normals** [Wallonie.be]

Meuse-et-Chiers zone to reinforced **drought alert** through July, and by late August the whole department had **203 of 447 communes at crisis level** with **declining groundwater and surface water** [Préfecture des Ardennes]

Without the locks on the main Meuse, the river would have been completely dry

Drought impacts escalate through the 2026 season





Whole of Meuse department under **reinforced drought alert,** the third of four severity levels, following an August water-resources committee meeting [Préfecture de la Meuse]

Safeguard fishing operation to move fish from a critically low-water reach [L'Est Republicain]

Lack of reliable low flow models/ forecasts (partially unclear)

Very low aquifer levels in the Haute Meuse

If the autumn and next year remain dry, the effects of hydrological memory could persist into next year

There might be some groundwater loss to neighboring basins in the Upper Meuse, which is still unknown

SHARE YOUR VISION:

WHAT WOULD A RESILIENT MEUSE LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

Water storage & hydrology · Land use & landscape · Ecosystems · Water quality · Infrastructure
Water availability & demand · Services & functions · Hazards & vulnerability
Governance & equity · Adaptation & evolution

Add your vision

Improved connectivity between sections of the river for ecological purposes

electrical power generation:
- cooling water availability
- water power plants

also important for flood protection

River Ecosystem (forest) Restoration in the Common Meuse

Larger reservoirs

Process justice: take into account voices at the smallest/local scale

Ecology is able to bounce back after extreme events

Less pine trees and more broad-leaved trees

Conversion of cropland/ grassland to forest

Store water in the landscape (green water)

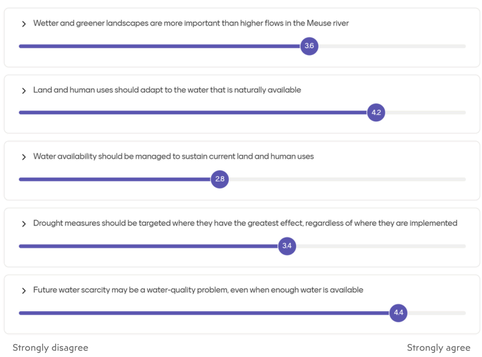
Possible dam on the Haute Meuse/ Moselle

Societal functions remain operational through climatic fluctuations

Wetter landscapes

Limited vulnerability of water network systems to climate or ecological changes

Average of 94 respondents at the Meuse Symposium 2026



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