Special Issue

River Connectivity—Environment and Ecosystem Functions

Message from the Guest Editors

River networks are affected by a multitude of pressures, but few compare to river fragmentation caused by artificial instream structures. The presence of artificial barriers can hinder or block fish and other aquatic species from reaching essential breading and rearing habitats, leading to contracted ranges, reduced abundance, species extirpation, altered genetic flow, and disruption of metapopulation and metacommunity dynamics. Further, the alteration of flow regimes and sediment transportation affects ecosystem functioning, often drastically magnifying the impact of local stressors, while conversion of lotic into lentic environments often favors the success and proliferation of non-native species. Even small barriers, although sometimes disregarded, usually vastly outnumber large dams, thus making their cumulative impact much greater. The increasing recognition of barrier impacts on river ecosystems and the fact that most existing barriers cannot be removed, due to the ecosystems services they provide, highlights the need to apply a systematic approach to enhancing river connectivity.

Guest Editors

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Editor-in-Chief

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