

**The Wupper: from a clean river to a sewer**

The Wupper is an upland river with a length of about 115 kilometres. It rises in Marienheide-Börlinghausen ("Oberbergischer Kreis" district) and flows into the Rhine at Leverkusen.

The Wupper and its many tributaries have a total length of about 2,300 kilometres. The Wupper basin has an area of 813 square kilometres.

In earlier centuries, the cool, clear and oxygen-rich River Wupper provided an ideal environment for many species of fish, such as salmon and brown trout.

Also, the Wupper and its tributaries were already used by people in prehistoric times. Water power drove mills and forges. On the meadows of the Wupper, yarn bleachers



kept their yarn moist with river water. Industrialisation continued with the growing number of dye works and other textile mills as well as metalworking plants.

In the 19th century, there was a dramatic growth in industry and the population in the Wupper valley. Waste and untreated sewage from businesses, factories and households were discharged into rivers. In effect, the Wupper became a sewer. There were also flooding problems as well as water shortages during dry periods.

The towns and villages along the River Wupper were unable to solve all the water management problems alone. An organisation able to deal with all these problems from the source to the river mouth was needed. For this reason, the Wupperverband river association was established in 1930 to assume responsibility for water management within the catchment area.

**The Wupperverband: river basin management for the Wupper**

Wupperverband is responsible for water volume management and water quality within the Wupper catchment area. As a public body, Wupperverband performs its tasks in the public interest and for the benefit of the association members and the public.

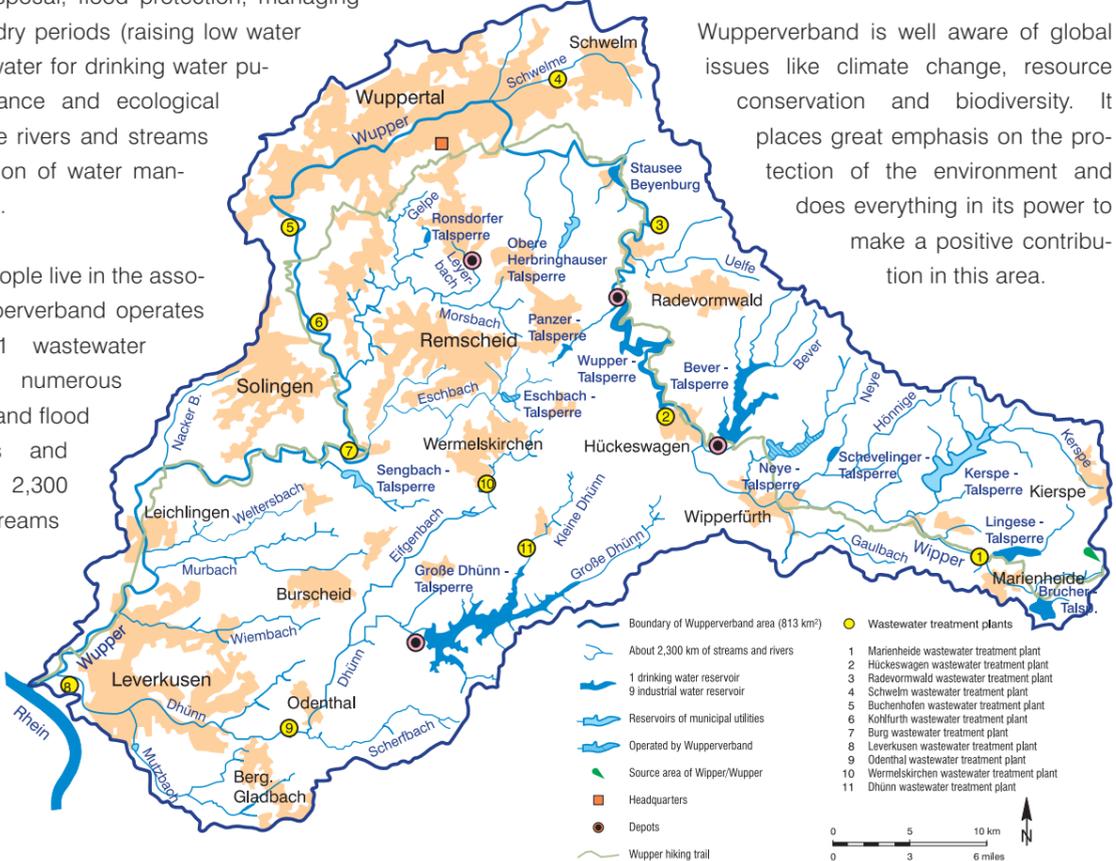
Its members are town councils, local and district authorities, municipal water suppliers, effluent disposal businesses and trade and industrial organisations in the Wupper area. Their contributions cover the costs of wastewater treatment with sewage sludge disposal, flood protection, managing water flow during dry periods (raising low water levels), providing water for drinking water purification, maintenance and ecological development of the rivers and streams and the identification of water management principles.

Around 950,000 people live in the association area. Wupperverband operates 12 reservoirs, 11 wastewater treatment plants, numerous storm water tanks and flood control reservoirs and manages around 2,300 kilometres of streams and rivers.

As the slogan "for water, people and the environment" suggests, Wupperver-

band considers that there are strong links between water, people and the environment. This means that Wupperverband focuses on people and their involvement in water management, from their right to clean drinking water to their need for flood protection and for guaranteed wastewater disposal. It is also very important for people to be able to enjoy outdoor activities in an unspoilt environment. Furthermore, economic factors and social development need to be taken into account.

Wupperverband is well aware of global issues like climate change, resource conservation and biodiversity. It places great emphasis on the protection of the environment and does everything in its power to make a positive contribution in this area.

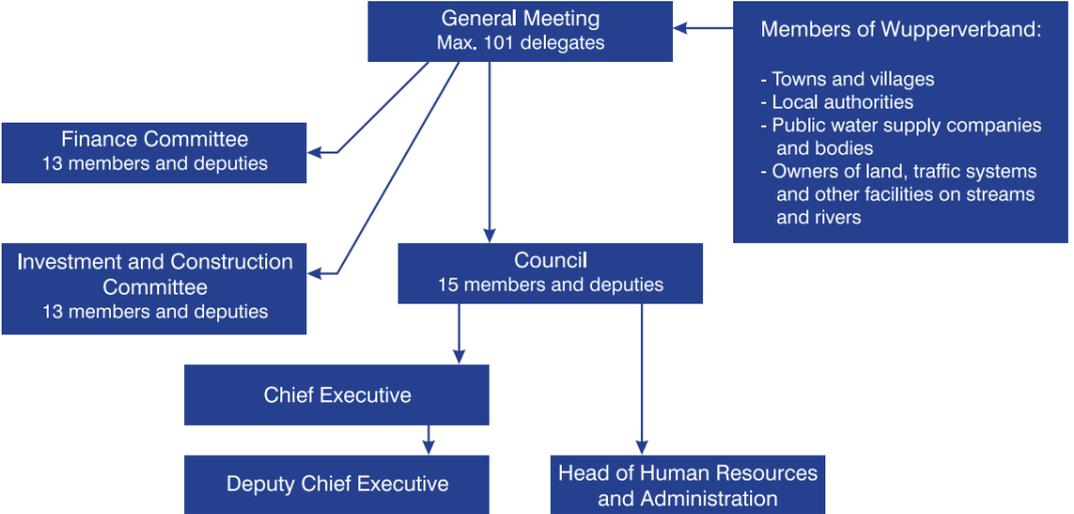


**Cooperation with members: partnership and responsibility**

Wupperverband acts as a partner and service provider for its members. The members appoint representatives to the association's General Meeting. As the governing body, the General Meeting decides on budget issues, cost development and other matters. The members of the committees (association council, finance committee, investment and construction committee) adopt strategic resolutions and decide on investments. This means that the members are involved in the decision-making process.

The responsible handling of members' subscriptions in a spirit of cost awareness is a top priority for Wupperverband. This includes reviewing costs, consistently optimising operations and implementing savings, managing finances and interest securely and making profits, e.g. through incineration of sewage sludge for third parties.

In order to allow subscription levels to be reliably planned in advance, Wupperverband and its committees agree on common targets. These targets establish how subscription requirements will develop in the individual business sectors over a period of several years. Wupperverband always aims to outperform these targets for the benefit of its members. The targets of the year 2002 set a maximum subscription increase of 2.3 per cent per year in the sewage and wastewater sector. Wupperverband not only succeeded in remaining below this target, but was even able to reduce its rates in this sector between 2007 and 2011 and make refunds to its members.



WiW mbh  
www.wiwmbh.de

Wupperversandsgesellschaft für integrale Wasserwirtschaft mbH (WiW mbH) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Wupperversand. Since 1997 it has been supporting municipalities, industrial companies and other organisations throughout Germany with its specialist knowledge. Its activities focus on development concepts and on process and energy optimisation for municipal and industrial sewage treatment plants.

#### Detailed information

about Wupperversand is available on its website [www.wupperversand.de](http://www.wupperversand.de) and in the river basin geo-information system, "FluGGS", at [www.fluggs.de](http://www.fluggs.de).

Our brochures are available free of charge and can be ordered using the order form on the website, by sending an email to [info@wupperversand.de](mailto:info@wupperversand.de), or by telephone on + 49 (0)202 583-0.

#### Published by

Wupperversand  
Untere Lichtenplatzer Straße 100, 42289 Wuppertal  
Tel.: +49 (0) 202 583-0, [info@wupperversand.de](mailto:info@wupperversand.de)  
[www.wupperversand.de](http://www.wupperversand.de)

#### Photos

Fish: Bernd Stemmer, kingfisher: Michael Taschka  
Aerial photos: Stuttgarter Luftbild Elsässer GmbH  
All other photos: Wupperversand

#### Printed by

OFFSET COMPANY  
42117 Wuppertal



Jan. 2013

## River basin management: achieving more together

Water management involves a wide range of tasks and many different participants. As at the time when Wupperversand was founded, cooperation is still a key factor for positive developments in the Wupper area.

Achieving more together – this is the motto for holistic river basin management. This means that all the relevant factors, such as sanitary engineering, wastewater treatment, flood protection, drinking water supply, fisheries, agriculture, leisure use and everyone involved such as members, authorities, water stakeholders, fisheries and farmers need to be taken into consideration.



Wupperversand even goes a step further in its approach. In this context, future-oriented issues play an important role when completing river basin management tasks. The EU Water Framework Directive and the Directive on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks form the most important legal foundations. Topics such as climate change, demographic developments, micropollutants, reducing energy consumption, generating and using renewable energies, biodiversity, leisure and tourism are becoming more and more important in regional development.

Wupperversand is committed to river basin management which is holistic, sustainable, cost efficient, cooperative and planned for the long term. Successful cooperation with stakeholders leads to joint solutions. Wupperversand uses a variety of tools in river basin management. These include workshops, scientific brochures, the internet, newsletters and the annual river basin management symposium. All the relevant information for specialists and the public is made available in the river basin geo-information system FluGGS.

## The Wupper: from an open sewer to a natural habitat

For a long time, the Wupper was known as one of the dirtiest rivers in Europe. Even in the 1980s, the river was heavily polluted, particularly in the lower reaches between Wuppertal and the confluence with the Rhine at Leverkusen. Over the past 20 years, the water quality of the Wupper has been significantly improved through huge investments made by Wupperversand, the local authorities and industrial companies. Nowadays, the water quality is so good that many species of fish have returned to the Wupper. 32 species of fish such as grayling, common barbel, common nase and brown trout can be found in the Wupper again. Even the most sensitive migratory fish, above all salmon, are also now being released into the Wupper and its tributaries as part of the migratory fish programme of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia. The transformation of the Wupper from an open sewer into a natural habitat for numerous species of animals and plants is a real success story. 30 years ago, nobody would have expected that fish would return to the river, anglers would pursue their hobby again and people would enjoy spending their free time by and on the river.



## River Basin Management in the Wupper Region

The most important objectives of Wupperversand's river basin management are to protect and develop the ecology of the Wupper and its tributaries and to preserve natural habitats and their benefits for people and animals. Wupperversand and its members as well as the stakeholders involved are ready to meet the challenges of the future.

