

Prof. dr. Mihailo Burić supports a cautious approach to the construction of small hydropower plants

Subsidized electricity prices should be reviewed

The construction of small hydropower plants is a very complex project. Although the hydropower plants are small, the problems are great. If they threaten life and activities of population - they should not be built, emphasized dr Mihailo Burić, B.Sc. in geology

PODGORICA – Small hydropower plants are beneficial for investors due to profits and the states because they receive electricity from their own territory. Efforts are being made to find a balance between these two benefits, with serious consideration of potential damages, i.e. negative impacts that may affect biodiversity, and especially the life of people, dr Mihailo Burić, B.Sc. in geology, said in an interview for Pobjeda. Our interlocutor points out that for the final assessment of sustainability of small hydropower plants not only capacity and quantity of produced electricity should be taken into consideration.

CRITERIA

- All small power plants are actually dams and impoundments and pressure mains on small watercourses, which have an impact on the environment, and particularly on the living world of waters and the surrounding human communities, which is the most applicable to our country. These impacts can be very significant and unacceptable or moderate, limited and acceptable. Therefore, the criterion for small hydropower plants relative to the installed capacity is not the main criterion for impact assessment - emphasized Burić.

This criterion is different in different countries, according to his words.

“We have established that small hydropower plants are those with capacity up to 10 MW. This, however, does not reflect the essence of the impact on nature and people. Small hydropower plants are economically attractive, especially because they have a subsidized price - said our interlocutor. The essence is, as prof. Burić said, in the water regime, technical solution for abstraction, potential impounding, transport and provision of guaranteed, water management and environmental flow. - The most important is water availability for all users. Simply put - if there is plenty of water for everyone, then an appropriate technical solution can ensure rational use of water and acceptability of small hydropower plants – Burić pointed out. There are also, as he added, run-of-the-river small hydropower plants with small impoundments. - Sometimes they can be useful, even for such water regime, if a good technical solution is put in place. As an illustrative example I state the great struggle against the construction of a hydropower plant on the Morača River. I have always asked a question - is it better to have an impoundment in the dry season or a dry river - said prof. Burić. The riverbed of the Morača River, as shown in the photo, was dry on 17 October. - I would prefer that now a pond was here rather than the dry

riverbed of the Morače, but it is often a matter of understanding and experience that are very different. I wish if it could be a matter of knowledge, although in Montenegro, I think we have serious difficulties with the position, identification and the way of applying knowledge - our interlocutor assessed. The construction of small hydropower plants, categorical is prof. Burić, is a very complex project. - Although hydropower plants are small, problems are great. If they threaten the life and activities of the population - they shouldn't be built. It's time to review the subsidized prices of electricity from small hydropower plants in the future - he pointed out.

KNOWLEDGE

Commenting the current construction of small hydropower plants on the Cijevna River in the Albanian territory, he said that this was only one of the possible projects. – It is a particular problem of cross-border impacts and is regulated by international regulations. Albania is obliged to inform Montenegro and present these projects to it. It would not be right to take a position about them before reviewing the data and technical solutions - said Burić. When this has been done, he added, then these projects will be considered, as were considered the hydropower projects in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. - Recently, an interstate Water Management Commission was established between Montenegro and Albania, of which I am a member. Whether this project of Albania will be considered by this commission or a specially formed interstate commission, as was the case with Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose chairman I was, will be decided by the state authorities when the time comes - said prof. Burić. Cooperation with Albania, he said, should also include Skadar Lake, as it is an interstate watercourse. - We still have an unresolved problem of regulation of Skadar Lake, which creates floods due to the waters that flow in from the territory of Albania. And this is a big problem, the solution of which is expected in the future. The construction of small hydropower plants on the Cijevna will be a much simpler project - our interlocutor assessed. Crucial for the construction of small hydropower plants, and also for every project, according to professor Burić, is compliance with traditional rules of knowledge, profession and regulations. - Bases and previous research, especially hydrological, must be provided in accordance with knowledge and profession. All begins with that and the data is capital for decision-making. If the data isn't accurate, i.e. if the hydrological regime of the watercourse and a comprehensive overview of natural and anthropogenic systems of space are not accurate, it is reflected on the quality of the whole design - prof. Burić emphasized. When, as he said, good bases are provided, the design and the design review are done. - Based on the approved design, works are carried out under expert supervision. After the works have been carried out, the technical acceptance of the facility, the trial work and the permit for commissioning will follow. Where such a procedure is followed, there is a very small space for mistakes - our interlocutor concluded.

The message sent from the protest in Dinoša was that small hydropower plants mean death for watercourses

Call for salvation of the Cijevna

DINOŠA - Subsidized electricity generation through the concept of small hydropower plants is a model that has no economic foundation and directly endangers the environment and the existence of the population along the river courses marked for introduction into pipelines, yesterday was stated at the protest near the Cijevna River in Dinoša.

In the upper, Albanian course of the Cijevna, which mostly goes through the Montenegrin part of Malesia, at least two mini hydropower plants are under construction out of allegedly planned 14, ecologists and NGO activists warned. The protest was organized by the Center for Research and Protection of Birds in cooperation with Biciklo.me under the slogan "Don't put the Cijevna in a Tube". It was accompanied by banners, "The Cijevna is our wealth - Cemi eshte pasuri jona". The protest was joined by kayakers, citizens and lovers of the Cijevna River, the fascinating canyon of which has been declared a protected area. The procession started from the center of Podgorica, and the meeting place was the bridge at the Cijevna in Dinoša. Biologist Vuk Iković briefly pointed out the key problems and unimaginable consequences of the construction of mini hydropower plants, which are reflected far beyond the area of works. According to him, putting a river into a pipeline is preceded by extensive preliminary construction works, which result in the destruction of local roads, and the removal of vegetation in a wide area of intervention. - Without vegetation, there will be major torrential waves that will result in floods in the lower, plain part of the river - said Iković. He points out that the very introduction of water in a pipeline leads to the elimination of the natural erosion process, which will cause the sand and gravel deposits to be reduced, which means that it will affect the condition and look of the beaches. – Also, the water in the pipe means stopping the process of water sinking, which can directly affect the yield of sources and wells - said Iković. He adds that water will lose the power of self-purification, and the zone necessary for life and reproduction of fish and aquatic organisms is endangered, which again affects the population along the banks. All in all, as he points out, there will be far-reaching consequences of which only investors benefit, whose produced electricity is bought at subsidized prices that are charged from citizens through item 26 in the electricity bill.

Ines Mrdović from the non-government organization MANS said that in Montenegro, 12 mini hydropower plants were built by the middle of this year, and a total of 60, mostly on the watercourses in the north of Montenegro, is planned. As she said, the subsidies are guaranteed for 12 years, and the purchase of electricity produced is also guaranteed regardless of whether Elektroprivreda has or does not have enough electricity. - Half of the total revenue of owners of mini hydropower plants is made of the subsidized amount of the price - said Mrdović. She pointed out that four companies currently operating these power facilities in Montenegro have a total of 18 employees, of which probably half are directors, which confirms that there is no economic justification for pursuing the construction of small hydroelectric power plants.