

Plastic bottles, rusty barrels and other waste are clogging the Drina river near the town of Visegrad. Huge islands of garbage floating on the Drina river are causing an environmental emergency and threatening the operation of hydropower plant Visegrad.

Upstream, the Drina's tributaries in Montenegro and Serbia carried even more debris after swollen waterways spilled over into landfills. The Balkan nations have poor waste management programs, and tons of garbage routinely end up in rivers. A broken barrier this week caused a massive buildup of garbage on the Drina that has threatened Bosnia's Visegrad dam.

Officials say that between 6,000 and 8,000 cubic meters of waste are pulled out of the river each year near Visegrad. Although the problem is not new, Serbia, BiH and Montenegro have done little to address the problem even as they seek to join the European Union. At the Visegrad dam, efforts began to clear away the clogging garbage and to avoid potential damage to the electricity system. In southwest Serbia, the Lim river has created a similar problem at HPP Potpec.