

Kayakers protest Balkans 'dam tsunami' in lake paddle

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Canoeists and kayakers out on Lake Bohinj in Slovenia on April 16, 2016

More than 60 kayakers took to Slovenia's Lake Bohinj Saturday to kick off a 35-day environmental protest over plans to build dams on rivers in six Balkan countries.

The colourful flotilla, led by Slovenian Olympic rower Rok Rozman, embarked on a 22 kilometre-(13-mile-) long paddle along the lake that

will continue along the Sava Bohinjka river.

The "Stop the Dam Tsunami!" movement aims at raising awareness of the impact of dam building on the region's waterways.

According to the Save the Blue Heart of Europe group's website, there are plans for more than 2,700 Balkan dam projects in the coming years, including 113 dams scheduled for construction inside the region's national parks.

"We would like to make people think on hydro energy in a slightly different way: green energy is renewable but the quality of water and environment will change (with the construction of dams)," Neza Posnjak, a protest organiser, told AFP.

She added that the action will continue over the next month when the kayakers paddle 18 mostly wild [rivers](#) in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia and Montenegro.

The rivers are renowned for their crystal clear streams, spectacular waterfalls and huge alluvial forests. Critics say dam building will affect river flow and damage biodiversity.

The group will finish its tour on Albania's Vjosa river on May 20.

"The most critical cases are the Sana and Una rivers in Bosnia, the Vjosa river in Albania and the [dam](#) in Macedonia's National park of Mavrovo," said Posnjak.

The environmental paddling action will include kayakers from all six Balkan countries, Germany, Austria and Italy, with local kayakers and environmental activists expected to join in at each stage.

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