

Management strategy for invasive alien species in the Dyle, Zenne and Mark river basins

LIFE RIPARIAS - Action A5 - English summary

30/06/2023



The RIPARIAS project has received funding from the LIFE Programme of the European Union

RIPARIAS

Reaching Integrated and Prompt Action
in Response to Invasive Alien Species

A project co-financed by Europe



Co-funded by
the European Union

In collaboration with:



Brussels Environment

Agentschap voor Natuur & Bos

Contrat de Rivière Dendre



Contrat de Rivière Dyle-Gette

Contrat de Rivière Senne

Instituut voor Natuur- en
Bosonderzoek



Belgisch Biodiversiteitsplatform

Service public de la Wallonie

Université de Liège, Gembloux
Agro-Bio Tech



Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij

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Summary

For many years, invasive alien species (IAS), both animals and plants, have been introduced and spread outside their natural range, where they can cause ecological, economic or health damage in their new environment. This is the case in, among others, Belgium. These IAS are currently mainly managed by local or regional managers, but rarely on a broader scale such as that of an entire river basin or even a sub-basin, especially when it extends across administrative borders. Better communication and coordination of management efforts among the many stakeholders within a river basin could greatly improve management effectiveness. Coherent management can also suffer from poor communication between managers who do not know each other sufficiently well, unfamiliarity with good management practices or administrative obstacles. The result is a lack of efficiency and, in particular, an increased risk of re-invasion of managed areas, especially from neighbouring unmanaged populations.

Since 2021, the European Commission and several Belgian authorities have been co-financing a LIFE project aimed at optimising the management of IAS along rivers and in ponds across regional borders. One of the actions of this project, called "LIFE RIPARIAS", is to draw up a management strategy that is coherent across the basin and brings together all stakeholders. The pilot area includes the interregional catchments of the rivers Zenne, Dijle and Mark. The project covers several species of riparian and aquatic plants and invasive crayfish, both emerging and already well-established species.

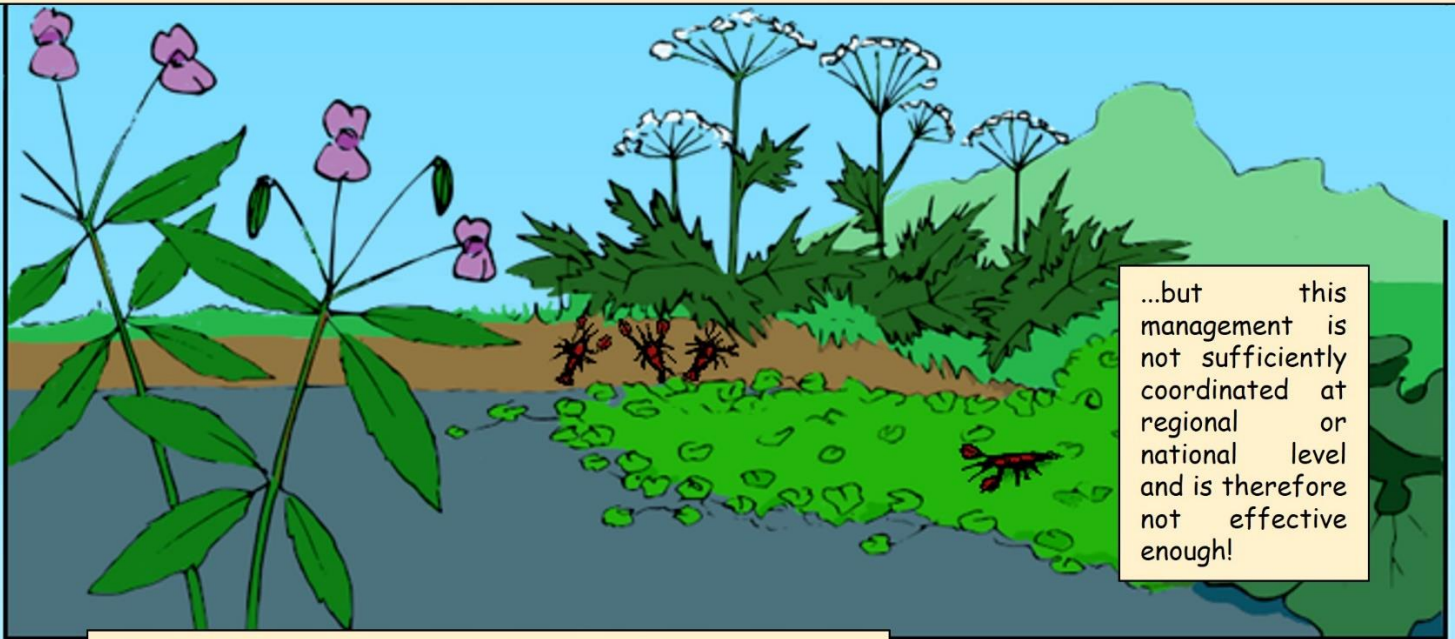
Stakeholders active in the three river basins were involved in the development of this management strategy. They were consulted at various stages of the development process during participatory workshops.

The areas and species to be managed were prioritised in a structured and objective manner using a decision support tool developed as part of the project. This prioritisation was based on an initial distribution of IAS in the area concerned for a given period (2021-2022 for plants and 2016-2022 for crayfish) - and thus depends on past management actions - but also on criteria such as the risk of reproduction from upstream to downstream in rivers, possible flooding, proximity to areas of biological importance or the degree of degradation.

A list of management priorities has been established for the 15 species that are still emerging in the area covered by LIFE RIPARIAS. For the species considered widespread (Himalayan balsam, giant hogweed, floating pennywort, parrot's feather and water-primrose), priority management areas are identified in the form of "pest-free areas" and "core areas". In the former, the aim is to eradicate the species completely, while in the latter they are contained and controlled because they are not considered eradicable.

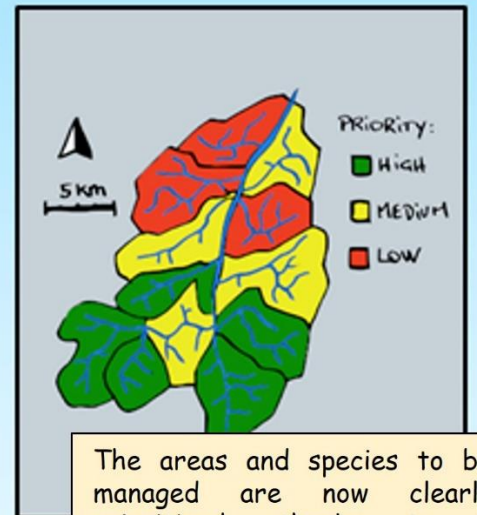
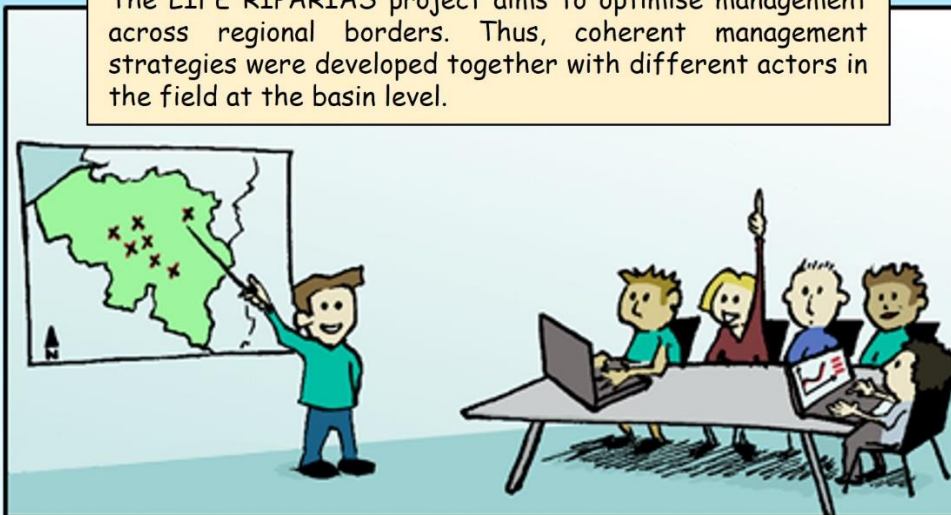
In conclusion, this strategy, jointly drawn up at all levels of management, allows the setting of common objectives for the different regions and provides a common basis for the river basins concerned. It optimises and increases the sustainability (for the period 2023 - 2031) of the management of invasive alien species in terms of sharing resources and time.

As invasive alien species cause ecological and socio-economic damage, they are managed by a number of players across the country...



...but this management is not sufficiently coordinated at regional or national level and is therefore not effective enough!

The LIFE RIPARIAS project aims to optimise management across regional borders. Thus, coherent management strategies were developed together with different actors in the field at the basin level.



The areas and species to be managed are now clearly prioritised, thanks to a decision-making tool developed by the project.

With clear management strategies, management of invasive alien species is more effective and optimises the use of available resources.

