

The Black Sea turning brown?

Saturday, 23 August 2014 00:00



23 August 2014 - During several decades, pollutants have entered the waters of the Black Sea. It is now facing an environmental crisis of extreme proportions and is considered one of the most environmentally degraded regional seas in the world.

Every year, about 350 cubic km of river water pours into the Black Sea, which has resulted in soaring pollution levels, threatening marine habitats and livelihoods. Areas along Georgia's almost 310 kilometres of coastline are starting to feel the effects of river waste water that is originating from the activity of more than 170 million people who live alongside the many rivers that feed the Black Sea.

Discharge of insufficiently treated sewage, widespread eutrophication, infiltration of animal manure and land erosion have resulted in large-scale microbiological and other contamination.

It is also damaging the country's tourism industry and is posing significant human health risks to those living in coastal areas.

Illnesses related to water quality, such as diarrhea and hepatitis A, have become widespread in the area.

In Georgia, as is the case in many countries, low public awareness and understanding of the impact that human activity has on the environment has been a core driver of its contribution to the polluted waters of the Black Sea.

"The widespread contamination of the Black Sea is a very real and very complex problem with multiple countries, ecosystems and economies standing to be irreversibly affected if urgent action is not taken to stem the flow of waste water from the region's riverside communities," [says](#)

Vincent Sweeney, UNEP's Coordinator of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (

[GPA](#)
).

UNEP, the [United Nations Environment Programme](#) , is working in partnership with the [Global Wastewater Initiative](#)

in two villages situated along Georgia's River Khobi, with the aim of demonstrating how awareness-raising activities can help change attitudes, behaviours and, ultimately, reduce contamination of the Black Sea.

"Starting in Georgia, UNEP hopes that the success of the waste water management campaign can pave the way for a local, national and, eventually, regional behavioral shift so that the hundreds of communities that are contributing, often unwittingly, to the destruction of their local environment can save theirs and one of the world's most precious natural assets."

The Black Sea turning brown?

Saturday, 23 August 2014 00:00
