

One third of fish species in Yellow River believed extinct

People's Daily. 16 January 2007. One third of all fish species in China's second largest river are believed to be extinct due to human encroachment and scant rainfall, the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) said Tuesday.

"There used to be more than 150 species of fish living in the Yellow River but one third have disappeared for good," said an official with the MOA fishery bureau.

"Precious species like carp and *Coreius Septentrionalis* (also known as the northern bronze gudgeon) will not survive in the river," he said.

"Overfishing, persistent dumping and hydropower projects along the river have degraded the underwater ecological environment," the official said.

"Low precipitation and the arid climate, which has caused the water level to fall to a record low, are also blamed for the shrinking population," he said.

Fisherman used to be able to catch over 700,000 kilograms of fish a year, but now they can only sell 40 percent of that figure.

The ministry set up its first ever integrated fishing resources committee on Tuesday to save the Yellow River from further degradation.

The new committee will be responsible for mapping out protection plans and tackling serious pollution incidents.

"This is the first integrated environment watchdog on the Yellow River, and it will be conducive to coordinated protection of different reaches along the river," said vice minister Fan Xiaojian.

Known as the cradle of early Chinese civilization, the 5,464-km Yellow River supplies water to more than 155 million people and 15 percent of China's farmland, and breeds a significant amount of fish in inland China, with freshwater aquatic output hitting 2.87 million tons in 2005.

The river, which originates in the Qinghai-Tibet plateau and winds its way eastward to the Bohai Sea in eastern Shandong Province, is being strangled by pollution - over 66 percent of its water is now undrinkable.

In recent years, central and local governments have taken measures to curb pollution of the river, including huge investment in the construction of waste treatment plants and the forced closure of heavily polluting factories along the river.

Source: Xinhua http://english.people.com.cn/200701/16/eng20070116_341792.html