

**Dr. Ivo Sanader,**  
Prime Minister  
The Government of the Republic of Croatia  
Trg Sv. Marka 2  
10000 Zagreb  
Croatia



Somewhere on the Drava  
in Croatia, May 2005

Sir,

I was so glad to learn from those brave people who try to protect my home at the River Drava that things have changed since my last letter. Is this true, did I get it right? Has the new plan by the Croatian Water Management Authority<sup>1</sup> which foresees the extraction of enormous quantities of sediments from the river been stopped? You can imagine, I'm really so happy and cannot believe it.

In the name of my family and my Croatian relatives: **Thanks to all who have made this come true!**

Now, I'm back from my wintering place in West Africa. I'm enjoying springtime and looking for my breeding places - open sand and gravel banks - along the river.

However, I'm also a little bit scared as I fear that my home, the Drava will be threatened again. You remember, we and our homes are protected according to the Nature Conservation Act in Croatia as well as by the EU Habitats and Birds Directives. Therefore, I really hope that extraction of sand and gravel will be banned from the Drava forever.

I trust that you will help me and my little ones and support the legal protection of the Drava.

Best wishes, your citizen Little Tern  
[mala\\_cigra@hotmail.com](mailto:mala_cigra@hotmail.com)  
Repaš, Islands 1-5, Croatia



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<sup>1</sup> (Public tender in "Jutarnji list" from 17 March 2005; call for extraction of about 2.000.000 m<sup>3</sup> of sediments from the Drava river on 20 locations in the next 3-4 years)



For those who do not know me yet:

I'm a small, pretty bird - the smallest Tern worldwide. In the good old days, we Little Terns used to be typical breeding river birds in Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary. Hundreds of us flew over the extraordinarily beautiful landscape.

I am not only a pretty, but also a sensitive little bird. I cannot breed on destroyed rivers without gravel and sand banks, or live without appropriate feeding grounds. Throughout Europe there are only three rivers remaining of this kind not destroyed and still offer a suitable habitat for me. The Drava within the border area between Croatia and Hungary is one of them. All the rest has been destroyed by hydropower dams, river regulation and sediment extraction along the river.

This river is my home: I find breeding places on its gravel and sand banks and its shallow water zones, bays and oxbows offer plenty of fish for me and my hungry little ones. I and my friends share the rare breeding places left. New islands formed by the dynamic river mostly on four sites as a string of pearls along the Drava.

My real home however, where I give birth to my children, is the 50 km long Drava river stretch between Legrad and Ferdinandovac and some places downstream to Osijek. But each year I am scared that on returning from my winter home in May my friends and I may find no place to live anymore!

***I really beg you to do your utmost to save me and my little ones and protect our last breeding places on the Drava: Please stop sediment extraction and river channelling forever!***



This letter goes to: The members of the Croatian government and parliament,  
Drava county heads and majors

CC: National and international NGOs, Local and national media in Croatia