

Safety for four million people in the Dutch delta

Dutch Water Program Room for the River

Facts and figures

The water in the rivers reached extremely high levels in 1993 and 1995. 250,000 people had to be evacuated in 1995.

Budget

€ 2.3 billion

Planning

Start: 2007

Completion: 2015

Current maximum discharge capacity

15,000 m³/sec

Discharge capacity on completion

16,000 m³/sec



Work in progress lowering groynes

The Netherlands has a population of over 16 million in an area (including the territorial sea and surface water) of just 41,528 km². The Netherlands lies in a delta, which enables three major rivers: the Rhine, Meuse and Scheldt, to flow out to sea. Without dikes and coastal dunes, around two thirds of the Netherlands would be flooded. Flood protection is therefore a very high priority in water management for the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment.

The cadence of Dutch history is marked by floods and the response to them. In 1993 and 1995, the Dutch rivers swelled to unprecedented levels. Large tracts of farmland were inundated; 250,000 people were evacuated. 250,000 people and one million head of livestock were evacuated. As a consequence, the Dutch government took measures to protect the rivers region against flooding. The approach, 'Room for the River', was born.

Natural flood plain restored

Room for the River, the implementation of which started in 2007, restores the river's natural flood plain in places where it is least harmful in

order to protect those areas that need to be defended. By 2015, through a series of more than 30 measures, costing 2,3 billion euro, we will have lowered and broadened our flood plain and created river diversions and temporary water storage areas. We will restore marshy riverine landscapes to serve once again as natural 'water storage' sponges and provide biodiversity and aesthetic and recreational values.

Local and global

Provinces, municipalities, water boards and Rijkswaterstaat are cooperating in the implementation of the Room for the River Program. The Minister of Infrastructure and the Environment bears the overall responsibility for the Program. Also internationally Room for the River collaborates with its neighbour countries. The countries through which the Rhine, Meuse and Scheldt rivers flow, cooperate closely on flood protection. These countries are The Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany. Room for the River also shares this experience with other countries all over the world, and highly values the experience obtained from these international exchanges.

