



# EUROPEAN TRIBUNAL IN DEFENSE OF AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS

Starting January 30th, 2021 • to May 29th, 2021



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## EUROPEAN RIGHTS OF NATURE TRIBUNAL "IN DEFENSE OF AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS"

Third Hearing

Vättern Lake

-Saturday, March 27th, 2021-

The third hearing of the European Tribunal for Aquatic Ecosystems will take place on March 27th 2021 at 5 pm (Paris time). Local people around Vättern have fought for many years to protect the lake. Now [the Vättern case](#) is being brought to international attention through the International Rights Of Nature Tribunal, organised by the European Hub of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature. Lake Vättern is one of five selected areas in Europe where a European Tribunal for Aquatic Ecosystems will symbolically examine if the rights of Lake Vättern have been violated by various polluting activities affecting the Lake.

Water ecosystems in Vättern are threatened by past, ongoing and planned activities around the lake. The activities that have damaged or threaten to damage the ecosystems include a zinc mine that leaks heavy metals into the water, planned mining activities to extract rare minerals, a large paper manufacturing company, and the Swedish military using the lake for target practice, both from the air and with heavy artillery from the shore. Military activities also lead to pollution of the dangerous chemical PFAS in the water.

### Law as a tool for the protection of endangered ecosystems

There is still time to act. From January to February 2021, the European Tribunal for the Rights of Aquatic Ecosystems heard two cases of aquatic entities to be protected in Europe: the Mer de Glace France and the rivers of French Guiana. There are three more hearings coming up for this Tribunal: Lake Vättern in Sweden (March 27th), the rivers of the Balkans (April 24th) and the Mediterranean Sea threatened by red mud in Marseille (May 29th).

Recognising the rights of Nature means recognising the interdependence between humans and Nature and accepting that humans can no longer dispose of it with impunity. Thus, it is a necessity to establish the legal personality of Nature in order to systematically take it into account in our political and societal choices. This legal evolution is necessary for the preservation of life.

Carina Gustafsson from Hjo who is a witness in the case, states that *'I am worried about my health, and the health of all those living around Lake Vättern. It is unacceptable that this activity is allowed to continue and even expand, considering that the Vättern is a water*



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*source for more than 300,000 people and that the water is becoming increasingly polluted the more chemicals and heavy metals that are released into the water.'*

For Pia Björstrand, a lawyer and environmental activist, presents the case: "Swedish laws are clearly inadequate to protect the health of citizens and the important ecosystems around Lake Vättern. The lake has been allowed to be polluted by various activities for many years. Those who pay the price include pregnant women who cannot eat fish from Lake Vättern, birds and other animals whose lives are devastated by the noise of aircraft or dangerous chemicals. It is unimaginable that, year after year, the armed forces are allowed to continue firing environmentally hazardous munitions straight into people's drinking water. Therefore rights of nature need to be strengthened."

This Tribunal aims to recognise the rights of Nature means recognising the interdependence between humans and Nature and accepting that States, companies and humans can no longer dispose of it with impunity. Thus, it is a necessity to establish the legal personality of Nature in order to systematically take it into account in our political and societal choices. This legal evolution is necessary for the preservation of life.

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