

You come to the Svartá as visitor, you leave as a friend

To whom it may concern

My name is Morten Harangen. I come from Norway, and I've had the great privilege of fishing the Svartá for the last 15 years. What is about to happen now, with the planned construction of a hydro power plant, is truly shocking and in my humble view – as un-Icelandic as it is possible to be.

The Svartá is unique. Not only the river and its stock of big, wild fish – but the whole environment. The rough nature, ever changing weather, the variety of birds, the extraordinary lava field in Bardardalur and the distinct feeling of...wilderness...does something to you. When I came for the first time, I thought it was going to be a one time-experience. There were so many other places I wanted to see and fish, as well. All the fantastic Norwegian rivers. Russia's Kola peninsula. Yellowstone Park in Montana, USA. The crystal clear streams of New Zealand. The Bahamas. Well... I have been to several of these places now – and believe me: Nothing compares to the Svartá. What I thought was going to be a single trip, has turned out to be an annual adventure. A trip I simply cannot be without. Over the years, I have invited friends and fellow anglers to join me. And you know what? They all want to come again – because the Svartá is unique. It is, no doubt, one of the finest trout rivers in the whole world. And now, like so many other rivers and natural areas worldwide, it is threatend by commercial interests. As you would expect, the angling world reacts with anger and surprise. It is sad and would be a great shame if carried out.

From abroad, Iceland is regarded as a country that cares for its resources and cultural identity. You protect your unique breed of horses from disease. You are proud of you magnificent salmon rivers. You protect your language from English influence. Iceland is regarded as a pure, proud nation. In my view, that is absolutely correct. I am greatly impressed with the work you do to preserve your identity and uniqueness. But now – you allow commercial interests to gamble with Svartá? Are you willing to sacrifice the tourism of Bardardalur and, possibly, tourism in similar areas in Iceland, too? A hydro will, at the best, represent a visual pollution that will drive tourists like me away. At the worst, you will mess up a finely tuned eco system – for generations to come. I am no expert, but I know this: The consequences of a hydro is not an exact science. An assessment does not give you all the answers - if any... Only afterwards, after the hydro has been built, you will – eventually – know what the price was. But then, my friends, it is too late.

Finally, let me say this: I know it may provoke some that a foreigner tries to interfere with a domestic issue. I know and I understand. I really do. But you must rememeber that the Svartá is not yours to gamble with. It belongs to future generations, no matter where they are born or where they live. It is our common heritage, as is our entire globe. For the sake of your children, Iceland's reputation as a green country and your unique nature: Stop this madness.

You come to the Svartá as visitor, you leave as a friend. Friends protect and care for eachother. That is why I stand up for this river. And urge you to do what you must know is right.

Morten Harangen
Norway

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