

Introduction

Lake Vättern is the second largest lake in Sweden. It provides drinking water for more than 250 000 people, a number that may increase substantially in the future as both Örebro and Stockholm, and even Denmark and Germany, are looking at Vättern as a source of water.

The communities living in the lake Vättern area have mobilised against the environmental destruction of Vättern and surrounding ecosystems for many years. Aktion Rädda Vättern (ARV) and Urbergsgruppen Grenna are two of many organisations and networks which have continued to protect Vättern and surrounding ecosystems in the wake of pollution of the lake by corporations and the Swedish state.

In 2018-2019 Swedish Earth Rights Lawyers drafted a declaration of the rights of lake Vättern with assistance from the U.S. based organisation Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF). The declaration was adopted by the Earth Rights Conference 2019 and it is the foundation of an emerging coalition for the rights of lake Vättern.

#1 Presentation

Presentation

Violation of the rights of nature:

The aquatic ecosystems in lake Vättern are threatened by past, ongoing and planned activities. These include activities such as a zinc mine leaking heavy metals into the lake, planned mining for rare earth minerals, a large paper mill and the Swedish defense forces military use of the lake for shooting exercise, both from the air and by heavy artillery from the shores.

In 2019 the Swedish Armed Forces were granted permission to expand Karlsborg military airport and extend shootings into the lake. Extended shootings in the lake will harm the water, affect nature experience, cause noises, harm the wildlife and harm activities by the lake such as farming, tourism and fishing. The air will be polluted by CO₂ as well as other polluting gases.

The water and land will be polluted by lead and chemicals. Furthermore, lake Vättern is a specially protected area according to Natura 2000 and has also received status of National Water Protection Area.

Studies of wildlife have shown that birds are severely affected by the shootings. There are many protected species within the affected area. The expansion of Karlsborg airport will entail a higher risk of contaminating lake Vättern with chemical products and hazardous waste, thereby harming the diverse fish fauna. The expansion will also negatively affect the sensitive bat colony in Karlsborgs fortress.

Mining concessions for exploration and exploitation of minerals have been granted to venture capitalist companies such as Tasman Metals AB and European Cobalt Ltd at Norra Kärr and Havsmon nr 1, close to Vättern.

Tasman Metals exploration concession was extended by two years in August 2019, and the company is currently completing their Natura 2000 application for a renewed mining lease.

Watch an expert from the Tribunal on the rights of lake Vättern held at Earth Rights Conference 2019 in Sigtuna, Sweden.



The proposed mining activities will result in increased risk of toxic contamination of lake Vättern, noise, negative impacts on rare and endangered species and surrounding Natura 2000 area. These activities will exacerbate the existing pollution of the lake by heavy metals, chemicals and radioactive materials.

The Injured Party

The Case Presenter



Pia Björstrand

Pia Björstrand is a practising lawyer, working as a Defence and family lawyer. Her heart has always been burning for Nature's rights, she just didn't know it until she took the course "The Earth is the home of the soul" and found new hope in her lifelong struggle for the Earth.

Pia has been an engaged environmental activist since ages, is now spokesperson for the Swedish organisation "Klimataktion", an active member of the local Transition network and a

member of the local board of Swedish Society for Nature Conservation. Pia is also a member of the board of "Naturarvet"; a Trust that saves old growth forests in Sweden. She is also a co-founder of Swedish Earth Right Lawyers and #Lawyersforfuture in Sweden.

The Injured Party



Carina Gustavsson, Lake Vättern Academy

Carina Gustafsson was born and raised by the shores of Lake Vättern. Her family have lived by Lake Vättern since time immemorial and were always taught to appreciate the crystal-clear springwater. As a Child she often Heard warnings to respect the strong and wild spirit of the lake. Carina has worked with Indigenous peoples rights and environmental issues for 25 years. She now finds herself fighting here at home, to protect that which is closest to her heart: Lake Vättern.

The Expert



Eva Charlotta Helsdotter

Eva Charlotta Helsdotter have more than three decades of experiences of water resource management, as a researcher, teacher and consultant. Her PhD in land and water resources management focused on the pollution of metals in ground and surface water and she has been working together with indigenous people in protecting their land and water. She is currently working as Associate Professor at Uppsala University in Sweden in the Dálkke-project where she analyzes consequences of climate change, how different political actions within the energy sector claimed to mitigate climate change and how animal, forest, lands and waters are affected.

The Legal Advisor



Mariam Carlsson Kanyama, Swedish Earth Rights Lawyers

Mariam Carlsson Kanyama holds an LLM in international environmental law from Lund University, Sweden. She has worked with the International Environmental Law Research Center (IELRC) in Nairobi, Kenya and is a member of Swedish Earth Lawyers (SERL). Her work at IELRC focused on climate finance and her contributions within SERL center on anticolonial and antiracist practices of environmental law. As a member of SERL she is one of the lawyers who drafted the bill of the rights of lake Vättern, adopted at the Earth Rights conference 2019.

Legislation

We ask:

That the Swedish parliament recognize the rights of lake Vättern according to the Declaration of the rights of lake Vättern.

That the Swedish state restore all natural water functions, all populations of organisms, soil and terrestrial and aquatic sub-ecosystems in lake Vättern.

That the Swedish state provide rehabilitation and satisfaction to communities that have been adversely affected by the above mentioned activities.

That the Swedish state provide means for sufficient surveillance of the health of Lake Vättern, with adequate testing of pollutants, also deep/close to the lakebed and increase the number of substances to test for.

That the polluting industries that operate close to the lake, be ordered to install state of the art purification facilities/treatment plants.

That Sweden adopt measures, such as the establishment of an Ombudsman for the Rights of Nature so as to adequately uphold, protect and implement the rights of Mother Earth according to the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth into Swedish law.