

3RD RIVER RHONE TRAINING:

PRIORITY MEASURES – EXAMPLE OF VISP

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In the frame-set of the River Rhone Project, four priority measures are being planned in order to increase the security against floods as quick as possible. One of them – the priority measure of Visp – aims to protect the city of Visp and its chemical industry in order to prevent a potential damage of 1.5 to 2 billion Euros.

A large participative process including all main partners allowed for an elaboration of the flood protection project in only about two years with good acceptance.

BACKGROUND

The densely constructed alpine valley “Valais” in Switzerland, is exposed to high flood risks by the upper Rhone River. The potential flood damage is estimated to about 10 billion Swiss francs (7 billion Euros). Therefore a third river training project (general project 1:10'000) is actually elaborated over the whole length of 160 km of the Rhone-River from its glacier source to the Lake of Geneva.

Some areas, presenting the highest risks, are to be protected as fast as possible. For this reason priority measures are planned on four river sections (Visp, Chippis, Fully and Sion) in parallel to the general project.

The priority zone of Visp itself represents a quarter of the potential damage (1.5 to 2 billion Euros) and will be presented hereafter. In Visp the Rhone River crosses a chemical industry complex, bordered by about four meter high dams. In case of a dambreak, waterlevels up to 5 meters are to be expected in the case of the potential extreme flood event.

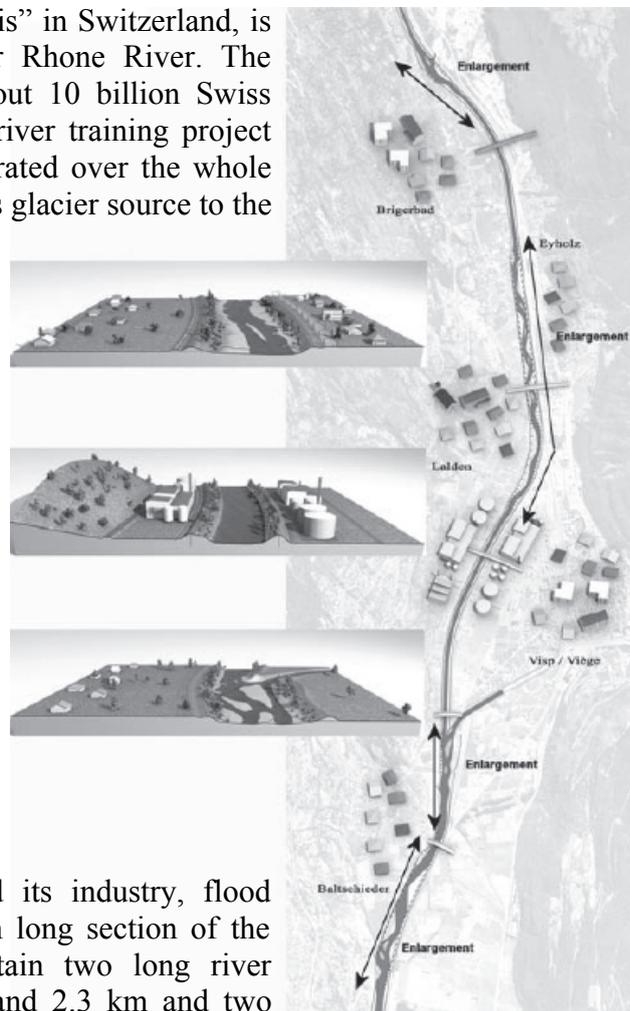


Fig. 1: Scheme of the planned priority measures of Visp, Switzerland

THE PRIORITY MEASURE OF VISP

In order to secure the town of Visp and its industry, flood protection measures are planned on a 8 km long section of the River (see illustration beside). They contain two long river enlargements (actual width +50%) of 1.9 and 2.3 km and two local enlargements up to two to three times the actual width of the River. Lowering the river bed combined with a reinforcing of the

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dams will allow for an increase of the discharge capacity in the industrial area, where an enlargement is not possible.

The project furthermore integrates a new road (4.9km long) and needs the displacement of the high pressure gas pipeline (about 4 km) and three high voltage lines (with a total length of about 6 km). It was coordinated with the actually ongoing highway project and the construction of a new railway line due to the new tunnel across the Alps and other local projects. The total cost of the project will be of over 65 million Euros and will need about 26.6 ha of land.

PROJECT ELABORATION – PARTICIPATIVE PROCESS

In order to deal with the important amount of interests, the project was elaborated within a participative process.

Beside the technical coordination between the different infrastructures, a follow-up group integrated the main partners like the five concerned municipalities, the main land owners, an agricultural organization, the mainly concerned industries, three ecologist organizations and a fishermen-association. During the project elaboration, seven meetings were held with 30 people participating in this group (see illustration below).

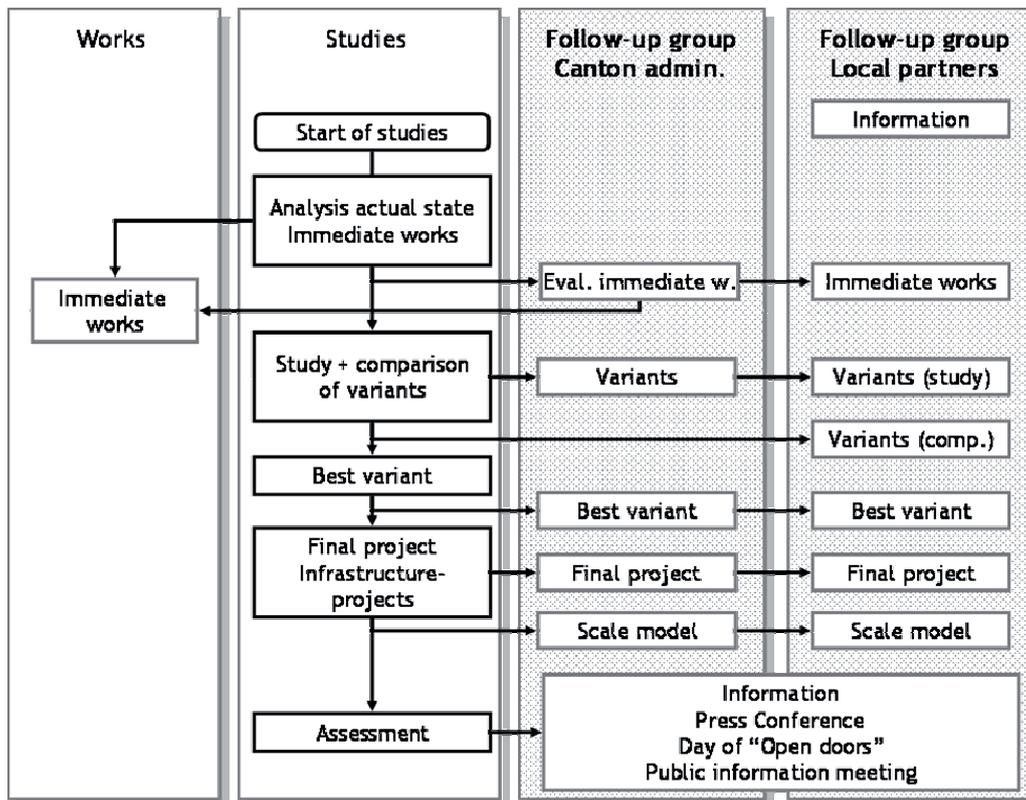


Fig. 2 Scheme showing the participative process. Each main step of the project was presented first to a follow-up group of the canton administration and then to the local follow-up group.

Thanks to this interaction with the project partners it was possible to design the project in only two years and to pass the public enquiry with only 80 oppositions for 600 concerned land parcels. The large population was informed by the newspapers, a specific bi-annual newsletter of the Rhone Project, specific information meetings and the possibility to visit a 50 m long physical scale model (1:50), especially built for this project in Visp.

Keywords: 3rd River Rhone Training, priority measures of Visp, participative process, integration of partners, multidisciplinary project