

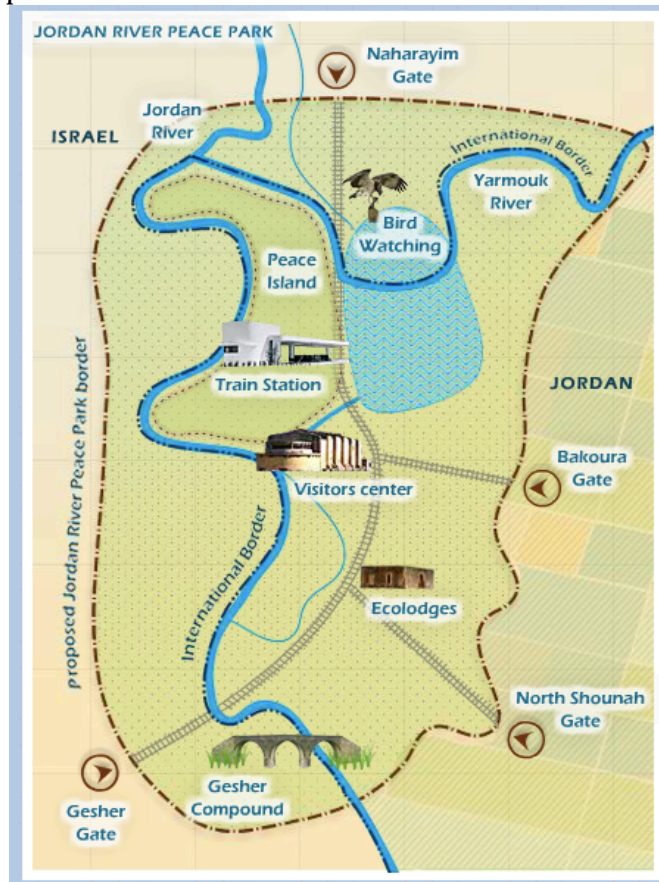
Jordan River Peace Park

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http://foeme.org/www/?module=projects&record_id=193

Israel/ Jordan

Size: 8,000 dunams upon realization of vision



Participants in coordinating the ongoing transboundary cooperation:

National Government:

- Jordanian government, Israeli government

Local Government:

- Jordan Valley Authority, Jordan; Muaz ben Jabal Municipality, Jordan; Springs Valley Regional Council, Israel; Jordan Valley Regional Council, Israel

Protected Area Administration: Not yet created

International NGOs:

- EcoPeace Middle East

Local Small-Businesses:

- The Gesher Community Center, Ashdot Tourism and Development L.T.D. (Israel)

Objectives: The creation of a protected area on both sides of the river will provide greater opportunities for biodiversity protection, cooperative management, joint research programs, education and collaboration on nature-based tourism.

Values and importance: The creation of the peace park, with the Jordan and Yarmouk Rivers at its center, would contribute to, and set an example for, the rehabilitation of the Jordan River. It would also greatly promote sustainable tourism as an economic development engine for the region, creating jobs for the communities in the area that face high rates of unemployment, and would protect and present the history of the site and its artifacts in a spirit of understanding and cooperation.

Aspects of transboundary cooperation: Transboundary cooperation would be in the form of general cooperative park management, joint research programs, joint tourism development, and cross border environmental educational programs. In addition, security arrangements will need to be negotiated and enforced, similar to the special regime status already in place on the smaller "peace island" area. A transboundary park along both sides of the River would turn the area into a unique tourist attraction for both local and international visitors. As a Peace Park, international funding and assistance could especially be of interest to Jordan with the area developed to support rural tourism including overnight accommodation on the Jordanian side of the valley as well.

Stage in the process: The idea of the Peace Park was signed on in a Memorandum of Understanding between the Mayors of Israel and Jordan who recognized the value and importance of rehabilitating the Jordan River through the establishment of a cross border peace park. This was followed by undertaking a pre-feasibility study, and then two "charrettes" (architectural design workshops) were held with architects from Yale University and the Bezalel Academy to present initial sketches of ideas. As part of the staged development of the Jordan River Peace Park, EcoPeace is currently finalizing the

terms of the establishment of the Jordan River National Park in cooperation with the relevant ministers in Jordan.

Official Protected Area Designation: "Transboundary Protected Area", as defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature

The Catalyst: Establishing the Peace Park would result in increasing the awareness of the potential benefits that can be obtained in terms of economical (tourism) development and ensuring the protection of the environment; management of biological diversity, of natural and associated cultural resources and to the promotion of peace and cooperation. The park would encourage regulated tourism, sustainable development and goodwill between neighboring countries.

History: "Al Bakoora" – "Peace Island" is a small island formed where the Jordan and Yarmouk rivers meet. In 1927, Pinchas Rutenberg, a Russian immigrant and founder of the Palestine Electric Company (PEC), reached a unique agreement with HRH King Abdullah I of Jordan to use this area to build the company's main hydroelectric power station. As part of the project three dams were built and in 1932, the hydroelectric power plant began supplying electricity to both sides of the border. Today, Israel and Jordan have already begun to develop an outstanding example of a cross-border park in the area of the old hydroelectric power station on Al Bakoora - Peace Island. In 1994, with the signing of the Peace Treaty by Jordan and Israel, the island was leased with special usage and crossing status to Israeli and international tourists. It was thereafter called the "Peace Island." EcoPeace's research has identified this area as especially rich with historical, natural and cultural heritage and proposes to extend down the Jordan River to the "Three Bridges" site, 3 kilometers south.

Barriers, challenges, obstacles, or constraints

- The lack of political buy-in has been the toughest challenge. The area proposed for a peace park from the Jordanian side is a strict military site that requires a special permit to enter.
- This is a unique initiative, first of its kind in the Middle East with very little experience on both sides.
- Responsibilities of Security measures between the Jordan and Israel, as addressed in the Peace treaty, need to be reviewed as for the time being it limits activities on the Jordanian side.

Since the political situation does not permit the creation of the peace park at this time, EcoPeace changed its strategy to developing sites on both sides of the River separately but in parallel until the political situation permits.

The Governance and Management Structures

- **Cooperative relationship:** At the moment, it is the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Mayors of the Israeli and Jordanian communities
- **Legal basis for cooperation:** A portion of this proposed area already enjoys a special regime status, as stipulated in Article I(b) of the Jordan Israel Peace Treaty.
- **Governance structure:** Not yet applicable
- **Current cooperative management arrangement:** Not yet applicable

Results

- The Peace park vision is part of the Lower Jordan River Rehabilitation. From the Jordanian side, a MoU with the Jordan Valley authority, responsible for the sustainable development of the valley, was signed with EcoPeace to develop the Jordanian side as a national park.
- Leveraged funds to conduct studies and actual development with areas of the proposed park in both Israel and Jordan.
- A detailed master plan and business plan for the Jordanian side will be conducted in partnership with Jordan Valley Authority

Lessons Learned: Through the many years of lobbying for the creation of the Peace Park, the most important lesson is **building trust among people** that live around the area in Israel and Jordan, highlighting to the people, including decision makers, the benefits; including economic prosperity.

It is critical that the levels of development are equal on both sides of the border.

For More Information: <http://www.foeme.org>

- Mayors Memorandum of Understanding
- Charrette I - (Architectural Design Workshop) with Yale University, Bezalel Academy and Palestinian and Jordanian architects
- Charrette II - 2014
- Prefeasibility Study
- "Promise of Peace" photography book
- "Bridging Waters" video