

Preface

Rivers, watersheds and aquatic ecosystems are the biological engines of the planet. They are the basis for life and the livelihoods of local communities. Dams transform landscapes and create risks of irreversible impacts. Understanding, protecting and restoring ecosystems at river basin level is essential to foster equitable human development and the welfare of all species. Options assessment and decision-making around river development prioritizes the avoidance of impacts, followed by the minimization and mitigation of dams to the health and integrity of the river system. Avoiding impacts through good site selection and project design is a priority. Releasing tailor-made environmental flows can help maintain downstream ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

*Strategic Priority 4
DAMS AND DEVELOPMENT WORLD
Commission on DAMS
November 2000*