

## AN OPEN LETTER

*(In the hope that others will join me in my call to action... The email address for the UN Water organization is [unwater@un.org](mailto:unwater@un.org))*

April 2014

To: M. Michel Jarraud  
Chair, UN Water  
c/o [World Meteorological Organization](#)  
7bis avenue de la Paix  
Case postale No. 2300, CH-1211  
Geneva 2, Switzerland

Dear M. Jarraud:

I am writing to you in your capacity as the Chair of UN-Water, the organization that selects themes and has oversight for the annual World Water Day. I am sharing this "open letter" with others who care, as I do, about the importance of clean, fresh water in our environment and the health and sustenance of the fish species that live in that water.

I wrote earlier to suggest a theme for World Water Day 2015 – a theme that would promote the conservation, appreciation, and sustainable management of all freshwater fish, and especially wild tropical fish that have fewer advocates than game fish, but I didn't know until informed by UN-Water's Communications Manager that themes have already been selected for the 2015 and 2016 World Water Days.

***Now, I am writing to you to urge your organization to designate – as soon as possible - - the 2017 World Water Day to "Freshwater Fish of the World," and I am urging like-minded individuals and organizations to endorse my call to action.***

In my first letter urging a "World Water Day: Fresh Water Fish of the World," I wrote the following:

As both a naturalist and artist, I recently published the book, "WILD: 75 Freshwater Tropical Fish of the World," which some have called "a stunning celebration of the world's most beautiful wild freshwater fish from the most beautiful places on earth - the tropics." These never-before-published watercolor macro-detailed tropical fish portraits and my text make an upscale guide for the naturalist and hobbyist and a tool for the educator and conservationist. But most of all, my art fosters an appreciation of the beauty of the wild fish that gave rise to the second largest hobby in the world, ornamental fish-keeping.

I have experienced tremendous interest in my work, as my highly detailed fish portraits are a first-of-their-kind. More importantly, however, my work has created renewed worldwide interest in preserving these magnificent aquatic animals, many habitats of which are endangered by unrestrained industrial development, hydroelectric projects, and the expansion of poorly planned agricultural efforts. As the first link in the rainforest to reef cycle, freshwater tropical rivers' health is essential to aquatic life globally.

The designation of this year's World Water Day to "Water and Energy" and its advocacy of hydroelectric dams is quite alarming to many of us who have seen that dam-building is often undertaken without regard to endangered and rare fish species that live in the rivers being dammed. This has been especially true in developing countries and in the tropics. Dam-building in the past has often been disastrous for anadromous fish spawning here in the US and is opposed worldwide by the conservation community. Many First World nations are tearing down their dams, and there is even considerable resistance to proposed dam-building in Third World countries.

Any type of development near fresh water needs to have a riparian zone buffer of woodlands to mitigate pollutant run-off and erosion. Development in wetlands destroys the buffer zone for run-off and erosion into saltwater. Without buffer zones development destroys bodies of water, fresh and salt. This is well known, and yet to date it is roundly ignored.

World Water Day designations in past years, such as in 2002 ("Water and Development") have similarly advocated for dam-building, while other past designations, while they may sound noble enough, seem to skirt critical issues related to water (*2006 Water and Culture and 1995 Women and Water are two examples.*)

In the many years in which World Water Day has been observed, not one World Water Day has been devoted to fish, fisheries, sustainable harvest, and aquaculture.

M. Jarraud, it is about time for the UN-Water organization to declare the next still-undesignated World Water Day, in 2017, as "**World Water Day 2017: Freshwater Fish of the World.**"

I urge like-minded individuals and groups to join me in and endorse this call to action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Flick Ford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Flick Ford  
Artist/Author