Water resources of Viotikos Kifissos basin: hydrogeological setup, evolution, threats and environmental status

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VIOTIKOS KIFISSOS BASIN

Viotikos Kifissos Basin (VKB) spans at 2720 km² and consists of three sequential interconnected parts, namely:
 Upper route, Median route, and Lower route (where Copais plain is located) including the sub-basin of Yliki - Paralimni





VIOTIKOS KIFISSOS BASIN

• Viotikos Kifissos Basin belongs to the Greek Water District GR 07 which embraces totally 7 main River basins





VIOTIKOS KIFISSOS BASIN / hydrolithology

Dominant hydrolithological units of VKB include: a) Flysch (impermeable), b) Metamorphic rocks (impermeable), c) Limestones frequently karstified (Permeable), and d) Granular alluvial depositions (semi-permeable)





VIOTIKOS KIFISSOS BASIN / hydrology

- The dominant hydrological feature is Viotikos Kifissos River that originates from Mt. Parnassus and ends through an artificial tunnel at Yliki Lake
- Secondary features include Melas river and the dense collective irrigation-drainage network of Copais plain





VIOTIKOS KIFISSOS BASIN / hydrogeology

- General groundwater flow along the parts of VKB is heading from NW to SE
- Copais plain is recharged by the lateral crossflows of the Median Route and the hydraulic connections with Mt. Parnassus (SW) and Mt. Helikonas (S)





VIOTIKOS KIFISSOS BASIN / hydrogeology

- Groundwater flows mainly through the extended karstic massif that connects the adjacent routes of VKB
- At the plain parts of the basin shallow alluvial aquifers exist with significantly smaller potential compared to the karst, still important as a buffer zone (hydrologically and in terms of pollution migration)





VIOTIKOS KIFISSOS BASIN / hydrogeology

Groundwater outflows Copais plain through three main routes:
 a) NNE towards Euboic Gulf through Larymna city, b) E towards Euboic Gulf through the extended karstic network of katavothraes, and c) SE towards Vayia plain





Application of MODFLOW mathematical simulation in a karstic aquifer. The case of Viotikos Kifissos River Basin (Panagopoulos et al. 2004)





Environmental and hydrogeochemical study of eastern Copais – Yliki plain and aquifer vulnerability assessment with the use of Geo-informatics (Tziritis, 2008)

Groundwater and soil geochemistry of Eastern Copais region, (Beotia, central Greece) (Tziritis, 2009)

Main environmental pressures of eastern Copais plain

- Elevated values of Ni and Cr due to natural (geogenic) sources of the substrate
- Elevated values of NO₃ due to irrational fertilization practices
- Early signs of salinization due to overexploitation of boreholes at the SE part
- Elevated values of Fe and Mn due to redox conditions





Simulation of NO3 spatial distribution (karstic aquifer)



Based on geological data as well as from classic chemical analyses and stable isotopes, the main NO_3 load of the karstic aquifer is transferred from the Median Route of VKB (Tziritis, 2009)

NO3 mg/L	
<25	
25-50	
>50	



Water Resources Management Plan (Special Secretariat for Water Resources)





VIOTIKOS KIFISSOS BASIN / Protected Areas

The Lakes Yliki and Paralimni are considered as special protected areas (2000/60 WFD and national legislation) for potable water supplies

The interacting water systems (e.g. karstic aquifers of VKB) should be considered as vulnerable systems too



Karstic aquifer \rightarrow high vulnerability to pollution due to :

- high permeability
- increased velocities of groundwater
- bypass of protective cover (unsaturated zone) through karstic sinkholes
- low potential of physical attenuation processes































Outline:

- Runoff from cultivation areas and livestock contributes significantly to environmental pollution
- Significant contribution of organic load, N and P
- Mainly diffuse (non-point) sources of pollution
- Overexploitation of groundwater resources leading to water deficiency and deterioration of water quality

























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VIOTIKOS KIFISSOS BASIN / Suggested measures for environmental protection

Water Resources Management Plan (Special Secretariat for Water Resources)

Basic Measures

(Indicative)

- Delineation of buffer zones for the protection of potable water abstraction boreholes/wells
- Determination of criteria for the implementation of abstraction limits per water body
- Data record of the surface water used for multiple purposes (irrigation, drinking, industrial etc) by major consumers (over 10m³/day)
- Installation of water metering systems to record groundwater abstraction
- Investigation of the possibility to perform artificial recharge in order to improve groundwater quality and quantity
- Compilation of a data base with the potential pollution sources (emissions, discharges and leaching)
- Development of specific tools for the rational and sustainable use of fertilizers and water



VIOTIKOS KIFISSOS BASIN / Suggested measures for environmental protection

Water Resources Management Plan (Special Secretariat for Water Resources)

Supplementary Measures

(Indicative)

- Rules and limitations for the protection of sinkholes and katavothraes
- Rational management of domestic sewages in residential areas with lack of central sewer system
- Small scale agro-environmental measures for the reduction of nitrate pollution and protection of vulnerable areas
- Rehabilitation of wetlands
- Further monitoring for the characterisation and delineation of water bodies with poor quality due to salinization phenomena
- Modernization and maintenance of irrigation networks
- Reuse of treated effluents (irrigation, industry, parks)
- Public information and awareness for water resources related issues.



ECOPEST



Strategic plan for the adaptation and application of principles for the sustainable use of pesticides in a vulnerable ecosystem



ECOPEST / environmental monitoring goals

1. Design and implementation of a monitoring network for soil and water resources (surface water, vadose zone leachates and groundwater)

2. Assessment of current quality conditions of soil and water resources and potential environmental pressures (baseline)

3. Evaluation of changes in the concentrations of potential pollutants, as a result of the strategic planning implementation (Low input Crop Management - LCM)



ECOPEST / Study area





- Natural background values & baseline conditions of critical parameters in water resources
 → Reference sampling
- Documentation of system's setup
 → Lithology, hydrology, hydrogeology, climate etc
- Documentation and impact evaluation of environmental pressures
 → Natural (geogenic) or anthropogenic
- Assessment of alluvial aquifer's susceptibility to pollution from surface released pollutants
 Calculation of Intrinsic vulnerability



Documentation of the system's setup







Documentation of system's setup









Assessment of alluvial aquifer's susceptibility to pollution from surface released pollutants





ECOPEST / Monitoring network of water systems

- Design of monitoring network based on project requirements and study area's specific characteristics
- The reference monitoring network (2009) is expanded compared with the operational network of 2010 and 2011 which is more focused
- The main goal is the assessment of reference environmental status (prior to project implementation) in order to be compared with the conditions after the implementation of project's actions

- Due to project's duration, potential noticeable changes in the concentrations of the environmental critical parameters are recorded mainly in the vadose zone leachates, which is the direct receptor of agricultural inputs
- > In order to assess the impacts which are related solely to the agricultural activities, the assessment focused on nitrogen compounds (NO₃ and NH₄)



ECOPEST / Monitoring network of water systems

- 3 years of sampling 2009 (reference), 2010 and 2011
- 4 sampling campaigns per year during wet and dry hydrological periods
- 34 sampling points: 5 in karstic aquifer , 12 in alluvial aquifer, 3 in Viotikos Kifissos River and 14 in the vadose zone of pilot area





ECOPEST / Sampling and analyses

Prototype system for the monitoring of vadose zone leachates





ECOPEST / Sampling and analyses





ECOPEST / Sampling and analyses

• Analyses were performed at LRI (inorganic) & BPI (organic)

• Totally 20 parameters were calculated:

-> major and minor ions

 $NO_3^-, NH_4^+, SO_4^{2-}, P$, Ca²⁺, Mg²⁺, Na⁺, K⁺, Cl⁻, HCO_3^- and CO_3^{2-}

-> Trace metals

Mn, Ni, Cd, Pb, Cu, Fe και Zn

-> Physico-chemical parameters (measured in situ by means of portable instruments) pH and EC





The assessment of Viotikos Kifissos River water quality may only be indicative, due to small number of samples (3)

- Good overall quality conditions (across pilot area)
- NO₃ and NH₄ concentrations are low (7.4-11.6 mg/L and 0.13-0.17 mg/L respectively)
- Individual elevated values of heavy metals (e.g. 938 μ g/L Mn and 45 μ g/L Ni) are considered as outliers related with random events and thus not representative.



Vadose zone leachates are considered as the most representative samples to identify the potential effects of the agricultural activities

- Increased MI concentrations due to irrigation water reuse (compared to karstic and alluvial water)
- Impact of the geological substrate, reflected on the elevated values of Mn (9-1134 μ g/L) kal Ni (6-196 μ g/L)
- Elevated values of NO₃ and NH₄ (5-81 mg/L and 0.3-7.5 mg/L respectively) as a result of irrational agricultural practices
- Elevated values of Pb (3-24 μ g/L) possibly related with car traffic and/or geogenic factors



Analyses results/ Vadose zone





Analyses results/ Alluvial aquifer

! Alluvial aquifer extends beyond the limits of the pilot and the wider area, hence the quality status of groundwater is not exclusively related with the activities within the study area

- Elevated values nitrates and ammonium (10-83 mg/L and 0.1-1.9 mg/L respectively) due to irrational use of N-fertilizers
- Specifically for nitrates, the annual median values of two out of the three monitoring years exceed the maximum parametric limit of 50 mg/L for potable water consumption
- Impact of the geological substrate as documented by elevated values of Mn (0-956 μ g/L) and Ni (3-92 μ g/L).



Analyses results/ Karstic aquifer

The quality status of karstic aquifer cannot be assessed safely due to the small number of samples (5), hence it is only indicative

- Good quality conditions
- Significantly lower concentrations of nitrates and ammonium values compared to the alluvial aquifer
- Low values of Mn and Ni



Trends in surface water quality (2009-2011)

lons	Trend	Physical	Trend	Heavy metals	Trend
HCO ₃	increase	рН	increase	-	increase
K, Na, Mg, P	stable	-	stable	Fe, Zn, Cd	stable
CO ₃ , SO _{4,} CI , Ca	decrease	EC	decrease	Mn, Cu, Pb, Ni	decrease



Changes in values (2009-2010)

- Decrease of NO_3 concentrations in 8 out of the 13 sampling points (-52.6%)
- Decrease of NH_4 concentrations in 10 out of the 13 sampling points (-73.2%)

Changes in values (2009-2011)

- Decrease of NO_3 concentrations in 7 out of the 13 sampling points (-53.8%)
- Decrease of NH_4 concentrations in 8 out of the 13 sampling points (-61.5%)

ions	trend	physical	trend	heavy metals	trend
Mg, Cl, CO ₃ ,	increase	EC	increase	-	increase
HCO ₃		-	stable	-	stable
-	stable			Fe. Cu. Zn. Mn. Ni.	decrease
K, Na, Ca, SO4, P	decrease	рН	decrease	Pb, Cd	



Trends in vadose zone leachates quality (2009-2011)

		20	09			20)10		2011				change 2009-2010			change 2010-2011			change 2009-2011		
ID	Καλλιέρ-γεια	λίπανση Ν kg/στρ	NO3 (mg/L)	NH4 (mg/L)	Καλλιέρ-γεια	λίπανση Ν kg/στρ	NO3 (mg/L)	NH4 (mg/L)	Καλλιέρ-γεια	λίπανση Ν kg/στρ	NO3 (mg/L)	NH4 (mg/L)	λίπανσηΝ kg/στρ	NO3 (mg/L)	NH4 (mg/L)	λίπανσηΝ kg/στρ	NO3 (mg/L)	NH4 (mg/L)	λίπανσηΝ kg/στρ	NO3 (mg/L)	NH4 (mg/L)
V01	М	9,1	25,2	3,3	С	7,7	18,4	0,4	C	8,8	2,3	0,8	-1,4	-6,9	-3,0	1,0	-16,1	0,4	-0,3	-22,9	-2,5
V02	С	10,1	62,0	4,4	С	12,4	41,5	1,4	С	12,2	70,2	1,1	2,3	-20,5	-3,0	-0,2	28,7	-0,3	2,1	8,2	-3,3
V04	М	10,9	14,8	7,5	М	18,6	32,4	0,5	С	13,5	29,0	1,0	7,7	17,6	-7,0	-5,1	-3,4	0,5	2,6	14,2	-6,6
V05	Т	9,1	8,2	2,0	Т	10,1	3,3	0,4	С	10,3	143,0	1,1	1,0	-4,8	-1,6	0,2	139,7	0,7	1,2	134,9	-0,9
V06	С	9,1	33,5	1,2	С	7,7	9,2	0,5	W	-	20,9	0,9	-1,4	-24,2	-0,7	-	11,7	0,4	-	-12,5	-0,3
V07	С	10,1	4,8	1,8	Т	25,9	16,2	1,1	С	6,7	7,3	1,0	15,8	11,4	-0,7	-19,3	-8,9	-0,1	-3,5	2,5	-0,9
V08	Т	9,1	7,4	3,3	С	10,1	8,9	0,6	-	18,6	68,2	9,1	1,0	1,5	-2,7	8,5	59,2	8,5	9,5	60,7	5,9
V09	С	9,1	5,8	3,4	С	7,7	8,9	0,6	С	8,3	14,4	1,9	-1,4	3,1	-2,8	0,6	5,4	1,3	-0,8	8,5	-1,5
V10	С	10,1	44,1	1,0	С	6,7	35,1	0,5	С	5,6	35,1	2,3	-3,4	-9,1	-0,5	-1,2	0,0	1,8	-4,5	-9,1	1,3
V11	М	9.1	27.9	1.1	W	11.5	33.9	2.7	W	-	20.5	1.6	2.4	6.0	1.5	_	-13.5	-1.1	_	-7.5	0.4
V12	М	10.1	89.1	5.8	С	5.7	126.0	0.4	С	6.7	35.7	0.6	-4.5	36.9	-5.4	1.0	-90.2	0.2	-3.5	-53.4	-5.2
V13	С	10.1	57.1	0.4	C	5.7	47.9	0.5	C	6.7	33.2	1.4	-4.5	-9.2	0.0	1.0	-14.7	1.0	-3.5	-23.9	1.0
V14	С	10,1	25,6	0,3	С	8,4	4,4	0,4	С	9,2	2,8	0,6	-1,7	-21,3	0,1	0,8	-1,6	0,2	-0,9	-22,9	0,3

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Based on overall data assessment:

a) Proper functioning of the environmental monitoring system is certified

b) Documented decrease in the overall amounts of applied fertilizers leading to decreased NO $_3$ and NH $_4$ concentrations



Environmental Monitoring Assessment/ Vadose zone leachates



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Environmental Monitoring Assessment/ Vadose zone leachates





Trends in alluvial aquifer water quality (2009-2011)

ions	Trend	Ph/cal	Trend	Heavy metals	Trend
NO3, NH4, CO3, HCO3	increase	рН	increase	-	increase
-	stable	-	stable	-	stable
K, Na, Ca, SO4, Mg, Cl, P	decrease	EC	decrease	Fe, Cu, Zn, Mn, Ni, Pb, Cd	decrease



Trends in alluvial aquifer water quality (2009-2011)

Concentrations of NO_3 and NH_4 are increased (2009-2011)

The increase is not uniquely related with the potential change of fertilization, because:

- Alluvial aquifer is the direct receptor of all surface agricultural activities which act cumulatively towards environmental deterioration.
- Changes in fertilization plans would require sufficient time (out of project's duration) in order their impacts to be identified in the alluvial water quality
- The hydrogeological basin of the alluvial aquifer is extended spatially to a much wider area that embraces plots which are not included in the project
- The quality of the alluvial aquifer is not individually sufficient to justify project's success
- Hence, the documentation of the beneficial impacts should be focused in the vadose zone system which is the most representative.



Environmental Monitoring / Conclusions

- 1. In general the quality characteristics of water systems are good with some exceptions mainly related with the nitrogen compounds of the alluvial aquifer.
- 2. LCM application has beneficial effects which are documented in the decrease of NO₃ and NH₄ values in the vadose zone leachates.
- 3. The alluvial and the karstic aquifers are receiving the cumulative impacts from the upstream areas, hence the assessment of their water quality may not be evaluated uniquely
- 4. The operation of the environmental monitoring system:
 i) set up the basis for the assessment and documentation of the current environmental status
 ii) developed the conditions for a continuous assessment of the qualitative characteristics
- 5. LCM application has a positive impact to the study area, even though in many plots the agricultural loads were already decreased due to their participation in the "National Program of Nitrates Reduction (Directive 91/676/EEC)"



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