

Lake Maggiore low, the Ticino in danger of dying

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It is the worst of possible scenarios: a long drought, the level of Lake Maggiore **has been lowered by 25 centimetres, by law**, and there are increasing demands for water, **also to supply Expo**. This is the current situation affecting Verbania Province, and it has forced the Ticino Park to raise the alarm. “The situation is so serious, that, at the Becca Bridge, where the river enters the Po, the level is 3 metres below the hydrometric zero,” Luigi Duse, the vice-chairman of the Park, explained.

THE DATA – The level of water in Lake Maggiore continues to fall; every second, 250 m³ of water comes out of the Miorina Dam, in Sesto Calende, but at the same time, the rivers bring only 170 m³ into the basin. **In practice, Verbania Province is losing 80,000 litres of water every second.** But most of the water coming into the river goes into the canals: the Naviglio has to keep the water high in Darsena, Milan; the Villoresi has to bring 600 litres of water per second to Expo; and the irrigation of the fields is at record levels. **“Under these conditions, only 25 m³ is left in the Ticino,” Duse explained, “and the whole ecosystem is at risk.”**

THE WARNING – And so, the Ticino Park has called upon the Institutional Technical Committee of the Po Basin Authority immediately to set the increase in the maximum regulation level of Lake Maggiore over the summer period to one metre fifty above the hydrometric zero. **“We’ve been saying the level has to be raised, for a year,”** he continued, **“and unfortunately, the weather forecasts are proving us right.”** With the warning, “No one can say they didn’t know,” so, everyone “must accept their responsibility.”

THE MINIMUM ESSENTIAL FLOW – This matter has been dragging on since last summer, **when the Environment Ministry decided to interrupt testing**, which, in the summer, raised the level of Lake Maggiore by half a metre, to combat the period of drought. The matter is now under examination by the Water Court in Rome, but the next hearing will not be before September.

THE ALARM – Without new water flows (read “rain”), the level of the lake will continue to fall, and the problems will increase. “By our calculations, **the level of the lake will be too low** in about ten days’ time,” Duse concluded, “and this will affect the whole basin, putting farmers, power stations and even the Expo site at risk.”

di [Translated by Prof. Rolf Cook](#)