

Eunseon Park and Listen to the City

# South Korea's Four Rivers Project

Dredging, damming and concrete  
destroying the environment.



Namhan River, photographed by the anti-4river development committee, 2010

*Listen to the City is an art-activist group based in Seoul, South Korea. We mainly research the urbanization of Seoul but recently we focused on sharing information on the 'Four Rivers Project'. What is currently happening to the rivers is terrible. The South Korean government continues to advertise this to other Asian countries as 'Green Growth', but we hope to let people in Asia know – this is a catastrophe.*



Rivers become cities, Listen to the City (printed poster), 2011

Four of South Korea's major rivers and their wetlands – a total area of 8,000 ha – have been damaged by a government project. Some 570 million cubic metres of sand and gravel from a total of 691 km of the rivers has been dredged. Sixteen dams have been created. Sand banks have been totally removed and concrete-paving laid along the banks.

The government says that the rationale behind the works is economic, enabling better navigation. However, dams are obstructing the natural flow of water, leading to the degradation of water supply. The project has failed in one of its main aims, which was to create more capacity to store the rivers' water. It was implemented prior to proper en-

vironmental evaluation and the long-term value of the wetlands have been destroyed. The wetlands are also home to many endangered species such as white-napped cranes and hooded cranes, whose numbers have declined from 3,000 to 1,000 since the Four Rivers Project started in 2009.

Local campaigners say that the completion of the Environmental Impact Assessment before the project plans were finalised demonstrates a lack of concern for the wetland system. They say the major rivers are already showing incredible damage and claim a natural disaster resulting from the project is inevitable. They want to prevent further engineering of the river – and wish to start restoring the habitats instead.



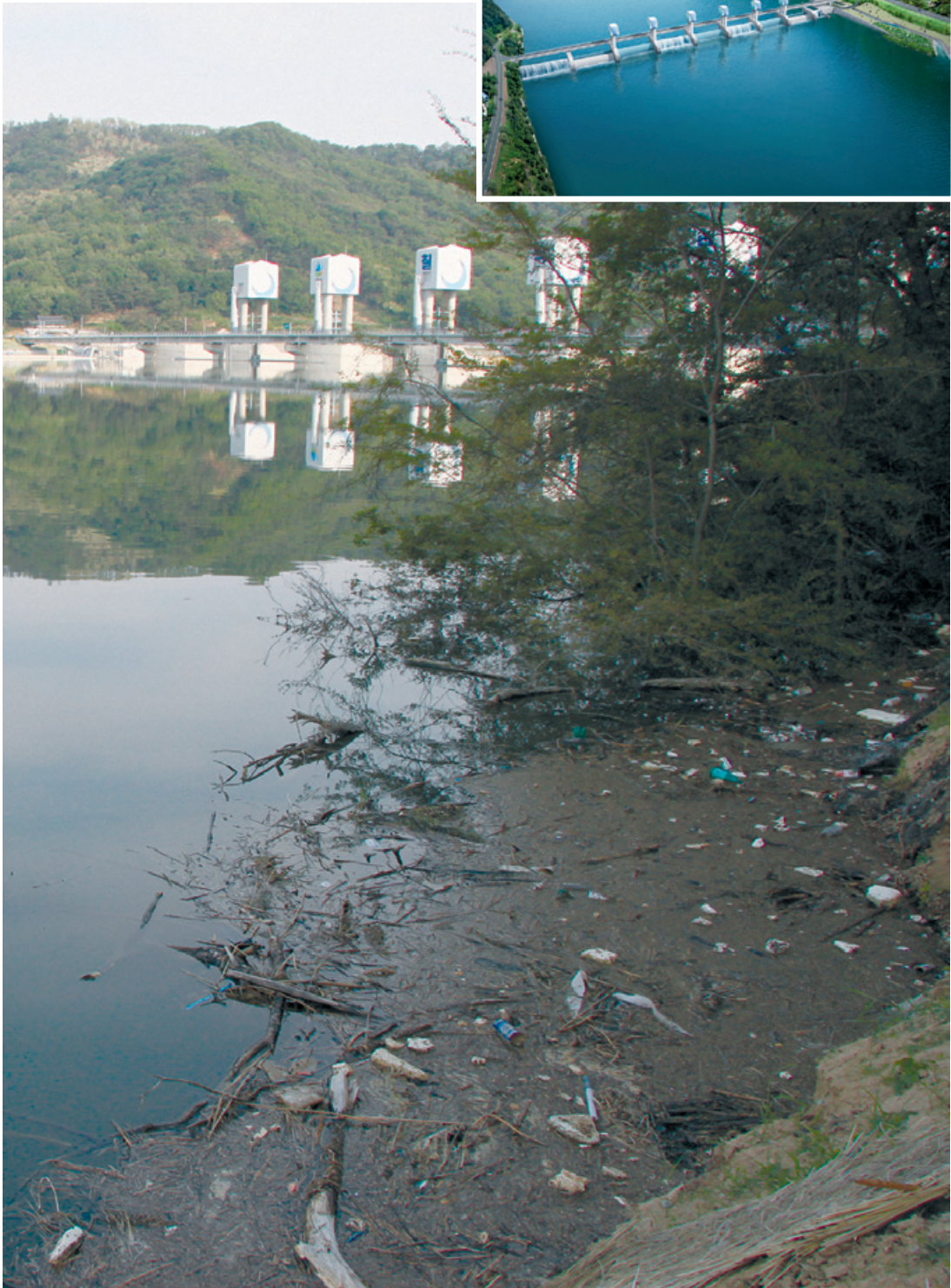
Namhan River, photographed by Park Young Hun, 2009/2011







The government's 3D picture and the reality,  
photographed by Jiyul





Buddha of Koryo Dynasty holed by the construction company

Dead fish at Ipo Dam, Namhan River,  
photographed by Park Young Hun and Nam Jongyoung, May 2012

