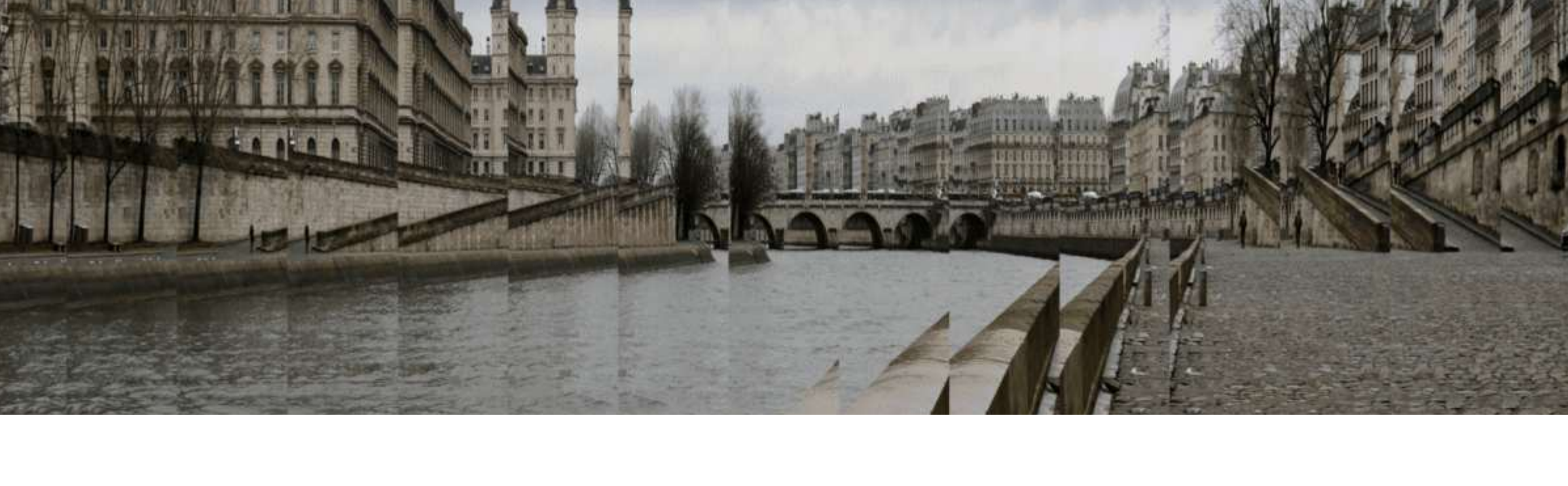




Paris (France) Honorary Citizenship of the Seine River

Location:

Paris, France

Status:

Approved in 2025

Governance Level:

Local

Legal Provision:

Declaration

Eco Jurisprudence:

Rights Of Nature

Natural Entity:

Seine River

Nature Type:

Freshwater Ecosystem

Urban

Initiating Actor:

Mayor Anne Hidalgo; Paris City Council

Initiating Actor Type:

Government



Summary

On 12 February 2025, the Paris City Council voted to grant honorary citizenship to the Seine River. This is a symbolic recognition, meaning it has no real legal weight; however, it signals a shift in awareness of the inherent value of ecosystems and environmental protection, and is a step towards formal legal recognition of the Seine River as a subject of law.

The resolution was proposed on January 28 by Paris Mayor, Anne Hidalgo. By granting the river honorary citizenship, Paris is using a symbolic measure to emphasize the deep historical, cultural, and symbolic connection between the river and the city of Paris. “This approach encourages us to rethink our relationship with ecosystems, moving from a purely utilitarian view to one of respecting and preserving natural entities for their own sake.”

The text highlights the river as a central element of Paris's geography, identity, and history, arguing that “the Seine deserves rights” and that citizens have duties toward it. “The Seine has shaped Paris from the first human settlements to the present day. The Seine is much more than a river. It is the vibrant soul of our city, the cradle of Paris, a source of inspiration and hope. The Seine is a place of life, meetings, and contemplation. It is a common thread that unites the banks and the neighborhoods.”

All these transformations embody a promise: to return the Seine to Parisians. At a time when, everywhere in the world, city dwellers aspire to more nature, access to large open spaces, and quality environments where air and water pollution are definitively a thing of the past. All these elements mean that we are indebted to the Seine. It is time to ask ourselves whether our legislative and regulatory framework provides sufficient protection for our rivers and streams, particularly for the Seine which meets so many needs.

Future Legal Status

The draft deliberation document states: “Legal personality could grant the Seine specific rights to nature: the right to protection, the right to conservation of areas of the Seine only slightly altered by humans, the right to restoration in the event of environmental damage, and a right of non-regression so that the effects of human action cannot increase.”

Paris Mayor, Anne Hidalgo: “It is with this in mind that I decided to organize a citizens’ convention, starting in March, on the rights of the Seine, with the ambition that this work could lead, in particular, to a bill enshrining the rights of the Seine as a major natural element of our country. To strengthen this initiative, I have invited elected officials from areas bordering the Seine to participate.”

Ecological and Community Context

The Seine, which runs through the center of Paris, has historically played a major role for the city and its inhabitants, including being a source of drinking water and serving as a vital economic waterway and trade route. This functional view along with industry and development has led to neglect and misuse over the centuries. The text notes that “the Seine is also a reservoir of biodiversity that has strengthened over the last few decades, thanks to investments aimed at progressively reducing the discharge of untreated wastewater into the natural environment.” The City of Paris aims to increase visibility around the river and strengthen continued efforts to protect it from pollution and overuse, which began in earnest with the effort to restore the water quality of the river ahead of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

Analysis

The action to recognize the river as an honorary citizen, and subsequent efforts to explore its recognition as a legal entity, reflects a growing awareness at the local level of the integral role ecosystems play in shaping both communities and the built environment, as well as their influence on health, culture, urban design, infrastructure, and economic life. This signals a broader shift toward ecocentric approaches to environmental governance. However, stepping beyond symbolism into practical legal frameworks with enforceable rights, clear institutional responsibilities, and measurable ecological outcomes remains an ongoing process.

Involved Organizations

Wild Legal

Related Initiatives

Paris Citizen Declaration: rights of the Seine River

Visit Initiative

France National Law: legal personality and rights of the Seine River

Visit Initiative

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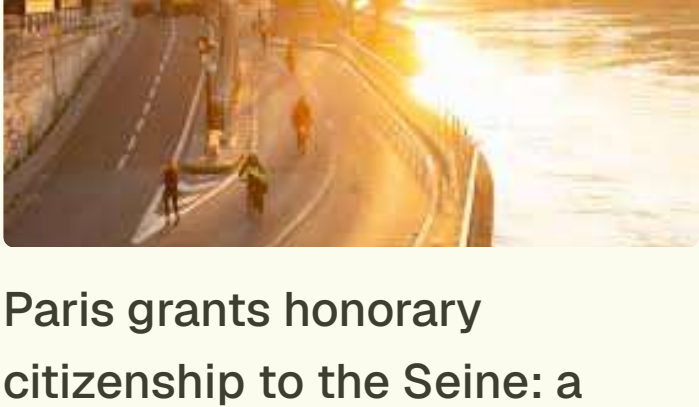
Draft Resolution: Honorary Citizenship

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Awarding of Honorary Citizenship

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Media



Paris grants honorary citizenship to the Seine: a historic recognition

City of Paris | Article



This emblematic symbol of the capital called "honorary citizen"

Le Bonbon | Article



Map of French Initiatives

Wild Legal | Website



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