

River flow champion, Dr Jackie King, wins 2019 Stockholm Water Prize

Stockholm, Sweden (19 March 2019) – Dr Jackie King is named the 2019 Stockholm Water Prize Laureate for her game-changing contributions to global river management. She has advanced the scientific understanding of water flows, giving decision-makers tools to assess the real costs and benefits of river system development.

Dr King led the development of the tools as a researcher at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, and then as Honorary Professor at the University of the Western Cape. With colleagues she created methods to demonstrate ecological and social implications of damming and de-watering rivers.

On receiving news of the prize, Dr King said: “I find it humbling, energizing and rewarding. I have never sought high-profile jobs but was happy to be a working scientist, free to say what I felt needed to be said.”

Her commitment to raising awareness of the value of rivers and their importance for millions of people has made Dr King highly regarded by academics and water managers globally. In its citation, the Nominating Committee notes that “Dr Jacqueline King has, through scientific rigour, selfless dedication and effective advocacy, transformed the way we think, talk and work with water as a flow of and for life.”

Dr King’s work influenced South Africa’s 1998 National Water Act and is increasingly guiding governments and institutions across the globe. “Governments developing their water resources understand the potential benefits but not necessarily the costs in terms of degrading rivers. We can now show these ecological and social costs at a similar level of detail to the benefits shown by planners. It is a new kind of information to help governments better understand the trade-offs involved in development as they decide on their preferred future,” she says.

Torgny Holmgren, Executive Director at SIWI, comments that “Dr King has helped decision-makers understand that healthy river ecosystems are not a luxury, but the basis for sustainable development.”

The prize is awarded by SIWI in cooperation with the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, which is responsible for assessing the nominations, and will be presented by H.M. King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden, Patron of Stockholm Water Prize, at a Royal Award Ceremony on 28 August, during World Water Week in Stockholm.

Note to Editors

On the Laureate: <http://www.siwi.org/swp2019>

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