

# The River Basin of the Western Inner Oslofjord



Vannområde  
Indre Oslofjord Vest

**As an intermunicipal network for local authorities and stakeholders, we seek broad cooperation with research institutions to improve the conditions in water bodies in one of Norway's most densely populated areas. The river basin has 201 water bodies that flow into the Inner Oslofjord in southeastern Norway. Climate change, population growth, and land development pose great challenges for the water quality in freshwater and marine recipients. A complex picture of impacts and interests will make it challenging to meet the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive in future years, despite significant national and local measures. There is a strong public engagement to save the Oslofjord, which has generated important political attention in recent years.**



The river basin of the western Inner Oslofjord is an intermunicipal cooperation between the Lier, Asker, Bærum, Oslo, Nesodden and Frogn municipalities, located in the county of Akershus. The municipality of Asker is the host for the cooperation.

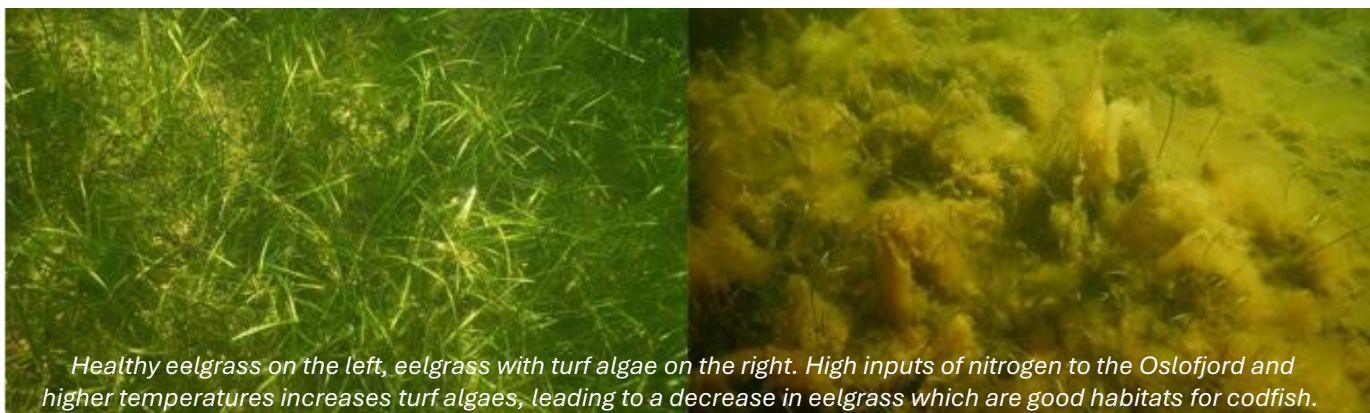
The cooperation was established in 2011 to coordinate efforts for better ecological and chemical water quality and to preserve biodiversity.

**The major responsibilities for the cooperation are to**

1. Coordinate monitoring of water quality, biodiversity and ecosystem qualities. The results are reported in the official Norwegian databases: [Vann-Nett](#) and [Vannmiljø](#).
2. Facilitate participation and cooperation between national, regional and municipal authorities in the river basin area regarding regional water management plans, monitoring and remediation.
3. Create engagement amongst stakeholders and highlight local issues. This is typically done through local projects and contact with local politicians and residents is common.

The cooperation has collected valuable data sets over many years and has a large network of authorities and local stakeholders. We believe this can be of valuable in different types of research projects regarding water quality management.

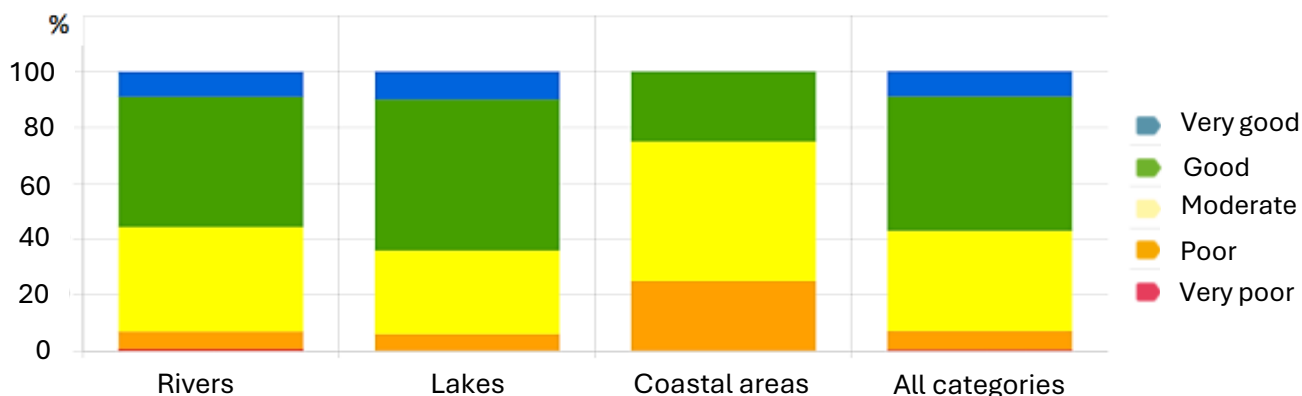
The river basin has a catchment area of 1,354 km<sup>2</sup> and consist of 51 lakes, 145 rivers and creeks and 5 coastal areas. They typically have catchment areas in minimally impacted nature, then flow through agricultural areas, and further through urbanized areas before flowing into the Oslofjord. The main pollution sources are discharge from sewage and agriculture. Development of roads, businesses, industry and housing also leads to loss of nature, and runoff from particles and nitrogen. The large supply of nutrients results in algae blooms and oxygen deficiency, and the Oslofjord ecosystem is under excessive pressure. There is a worrying decline in species like cod and marine plants like kelp and eelgrass. This has resulted in a fishing ban for the next ten years starting in 2026.



*Healthy eelgrass on the left, eelgrass with turf algae on the right. High inputs of nitrogen to the Oslofjord and higher temperatures increases turf algae, leading to a decrease in eelgrass which are good habitats for codfish.*

## Ecological status in natural water bodies in the river basin

Ecological surveys show that more than 50 % of the water bodies are in good or very good condition. About 35 % of the water bodies are in moderate condition, and many are approaching good condition. But for 10-15 water bodies the trend is toward poor condition. 12 water bodies are also classified as poor condition, and one as is in very poor ecological condition. The following gives an overview of the percentage distribution as of August 2024 of ecological status for the water bodies in the water area, categorized by water category.



## Chemical status in natural water bodies in the river basin

Chemical status describes the levels of environmental contaminants (priority substances) that may pose a risk to the aquatic environment and human health. Almost all water bodies in the river basin that are at risk of not achieving their environmental goals are assessed with threshold values for pollutants. These are mainly affected by landfills, waste deposits, and road runoff. 26 % of the water bodies are classified as having good chemical condition, 17 % are classified as poor and 57 % are not classified yet.

## Mitigation measures

An action program for the river basin has been adopted for the period 2022 – 2027. The proposed measures are followed up by the authority that has the legal framework or other means to implement them. Approximately 470 measures are suggested to be implemented in the river basin for the 6 year period. These coincide with a plan from the Norwegian government specifically aimed at the Oslofjord. Measures to minimize pollution to the fjord include:

- Securing important natural habitats, also in the sea, in municipal land-use planning
- Stricter coastal land management to remove illegal structures and prevent development
- Reducing erosion and nutrient inputs from agriculture
- Monitoring and follow-up of municipal waste disposal sites
- Measures related to runoff from shooting ranges
- Mapping and combating invasive marine species
- Rehabilitating and renewing the sewage network
- Systematic emptying of sand traps

Many inhabitants who live along the Oslofjord, and non-profit organizations, have a strong commitment to the local lakes, rivers and fjord and actively participate in mapping activities, beach cleanups and for example combatting the invasive Pacific oyster.

