Navigation Restrictions and the Regulation of the Navigation Regime, Particularly in Low-Water Conditions on the Danube

Working Group on Technical Matters,
Danube Commission
10-12 November 2026, Budapest

Executive Agency
EXPLORATION AND MAINTENANCE
OF THE DANUBE RIVER

Hydrological conditions on the Danube until October 2026

The Danube River at Svishtov experienced extreme and prolonged low-water conditions in 2026. The mean water level was only 104.8 cm, approximately 68% below the long-term mean for the same period (1941–2025). On 17 October, a water level of −93 cm was recorded, representing the lowest value in the available daily observation record dating back to 1941. Water levels remained below the Low Navigable Water Level (LNWL) of 76 cm on 135 days, including 104 days with negative gauge readings. Compared with the low-water years of 2022 and 2025, 2026 stands out for both lower water levels and the exceptional persistence of negative readings.

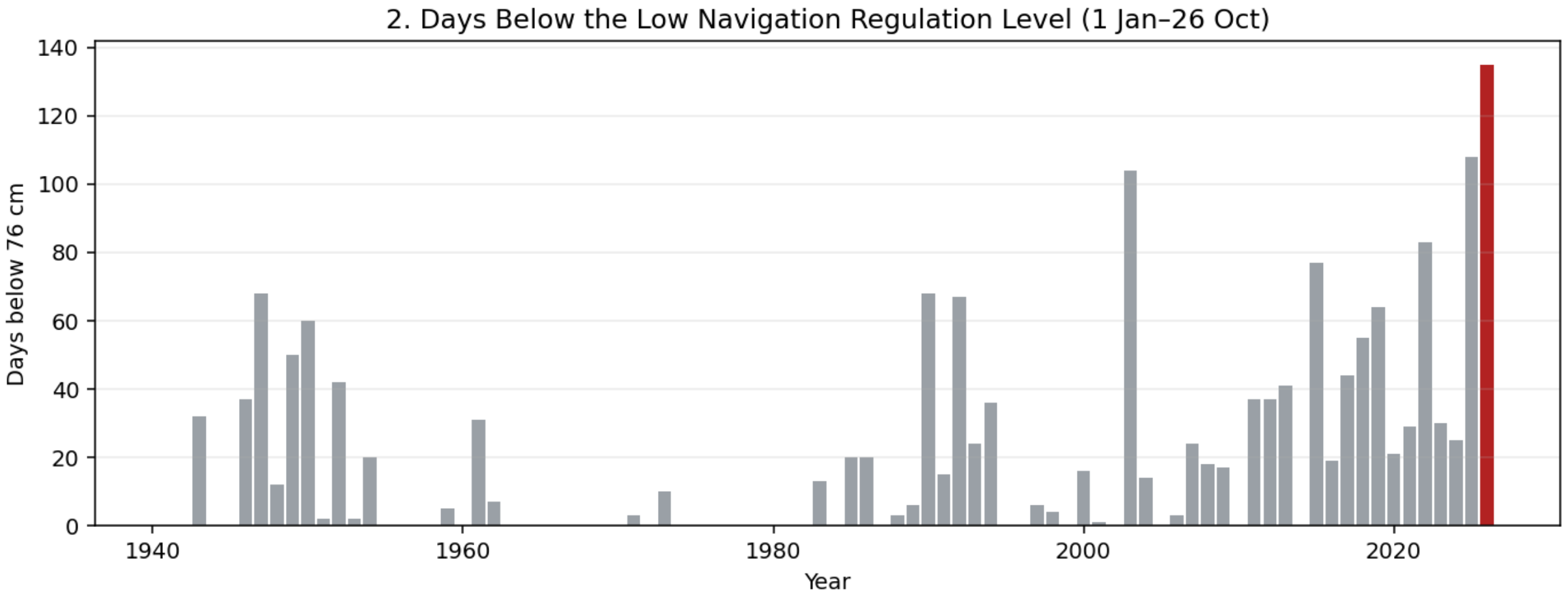


Hydrological conditions on the Danube until October 2026

COMPARISON OF DANUBE RIVER MINIMUM WATER LEVELS

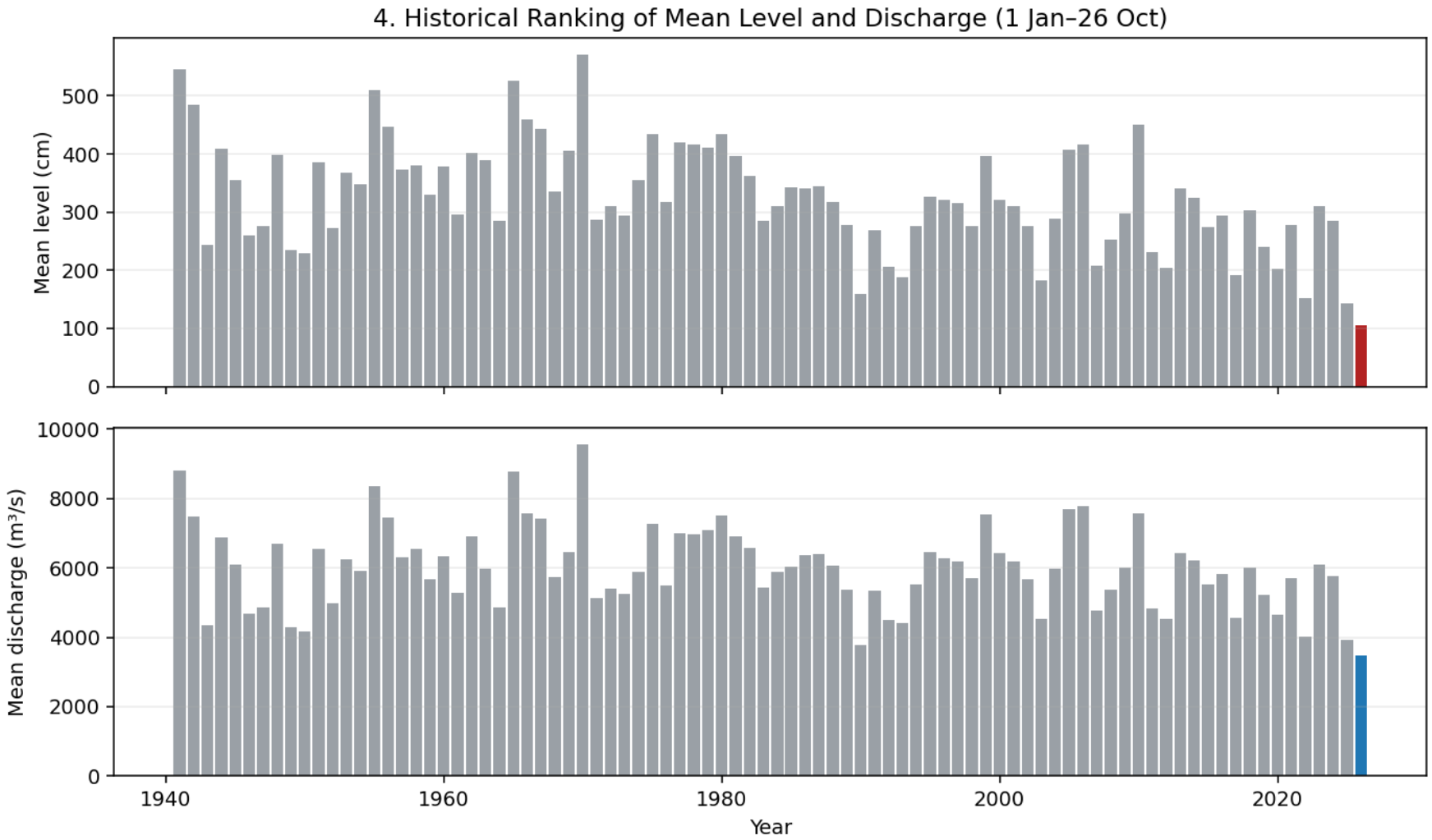
Km	Hydrometric Station	Historical Minimum		New Record Minimum	
		Minimum (cm)	Date	Minimum (cm)	Date
833.600 Km	Novo Selo	-42	22.01.1985	-105	12-14.10.2026
743.300 Km	Lom	+11	06.10.2003	-55	14-16.10.2026
678.000 Km	Oryahovo	-100	07.01.1954	-141	16.10.2026
554.300 Km	Svishtov	-55	07.09.2003	-93	17-18.10.2026 20-21.10.2026
495.600 Km	Ruse	-73	08.09.2003	-141	18-19.10.2026
375.500 Km	Silistra	-53	23-24.08.2022	-143	20.10.2026 23.10.2026

Hydrological conditions on the Danube until October 2026



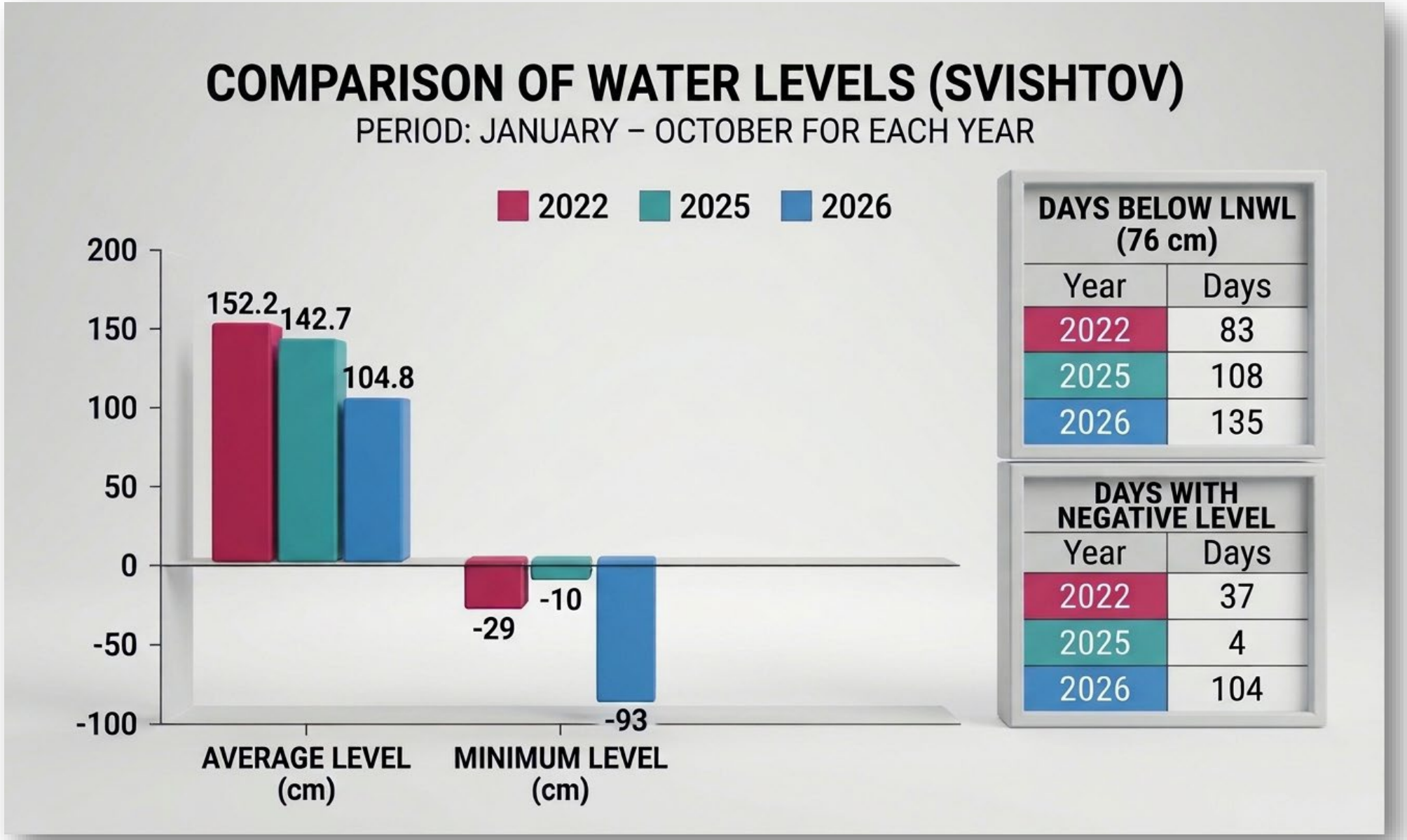
The number of days below 76 cm is compared for the common period from 1 January to 26 October, allowing the persistence of low-water conditions in 2026 to be assessed historically.

Hydrological conditions on the Danube until October 2026

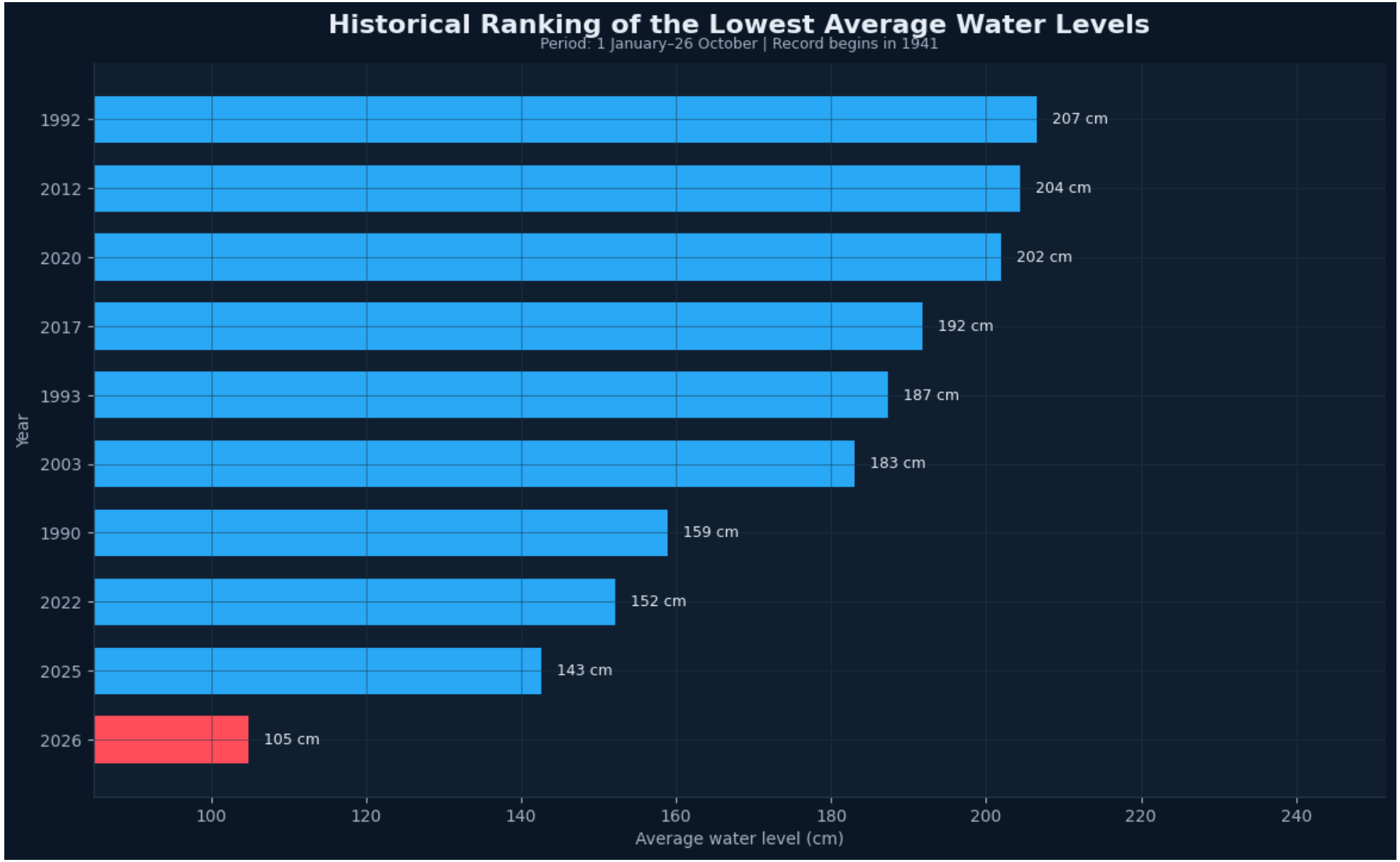


The same calendar period is used for each year to assess how unusual the 2026 mean water level and discharge are within the available historical record.

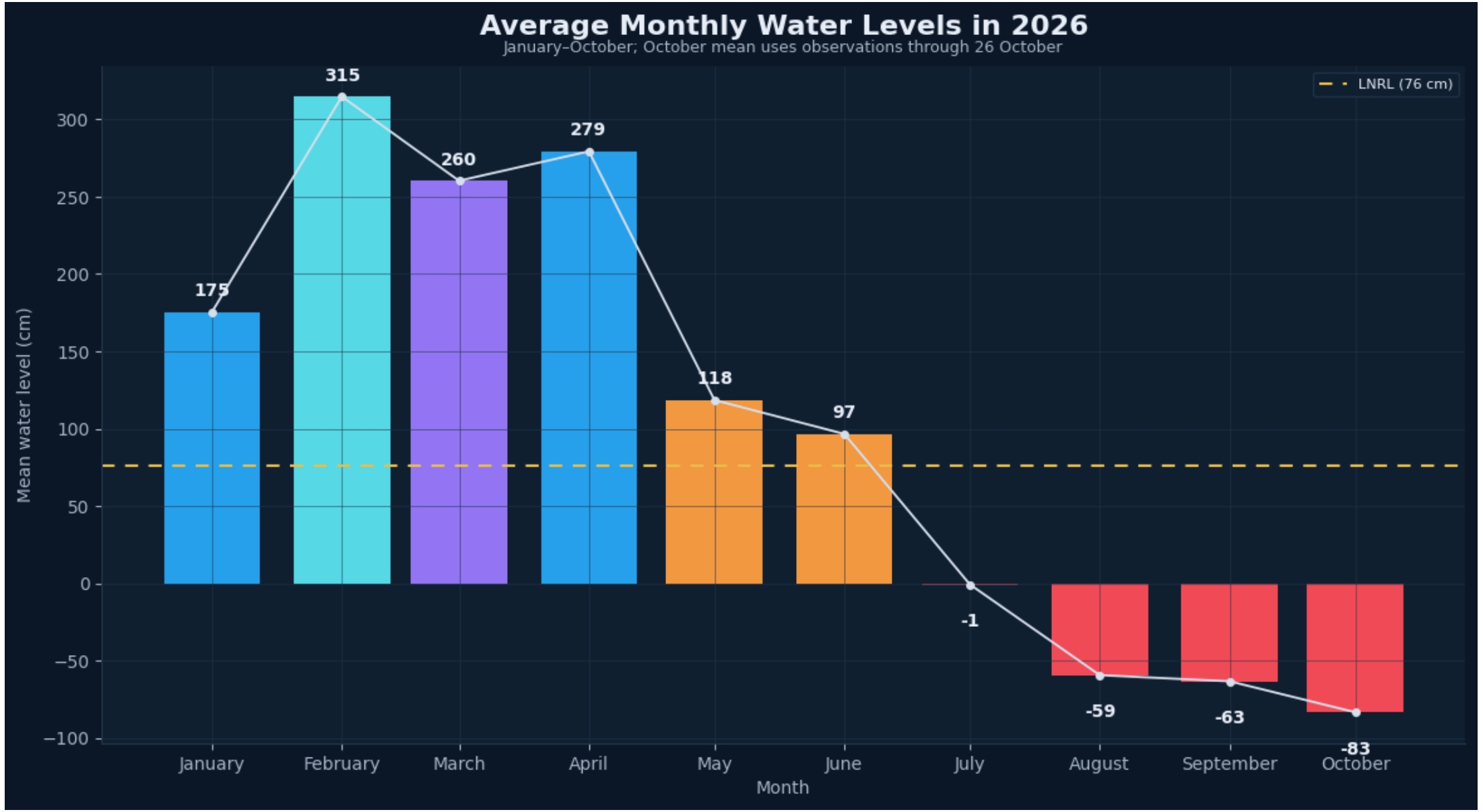
Hydrological conditions on the Danube until October 2026



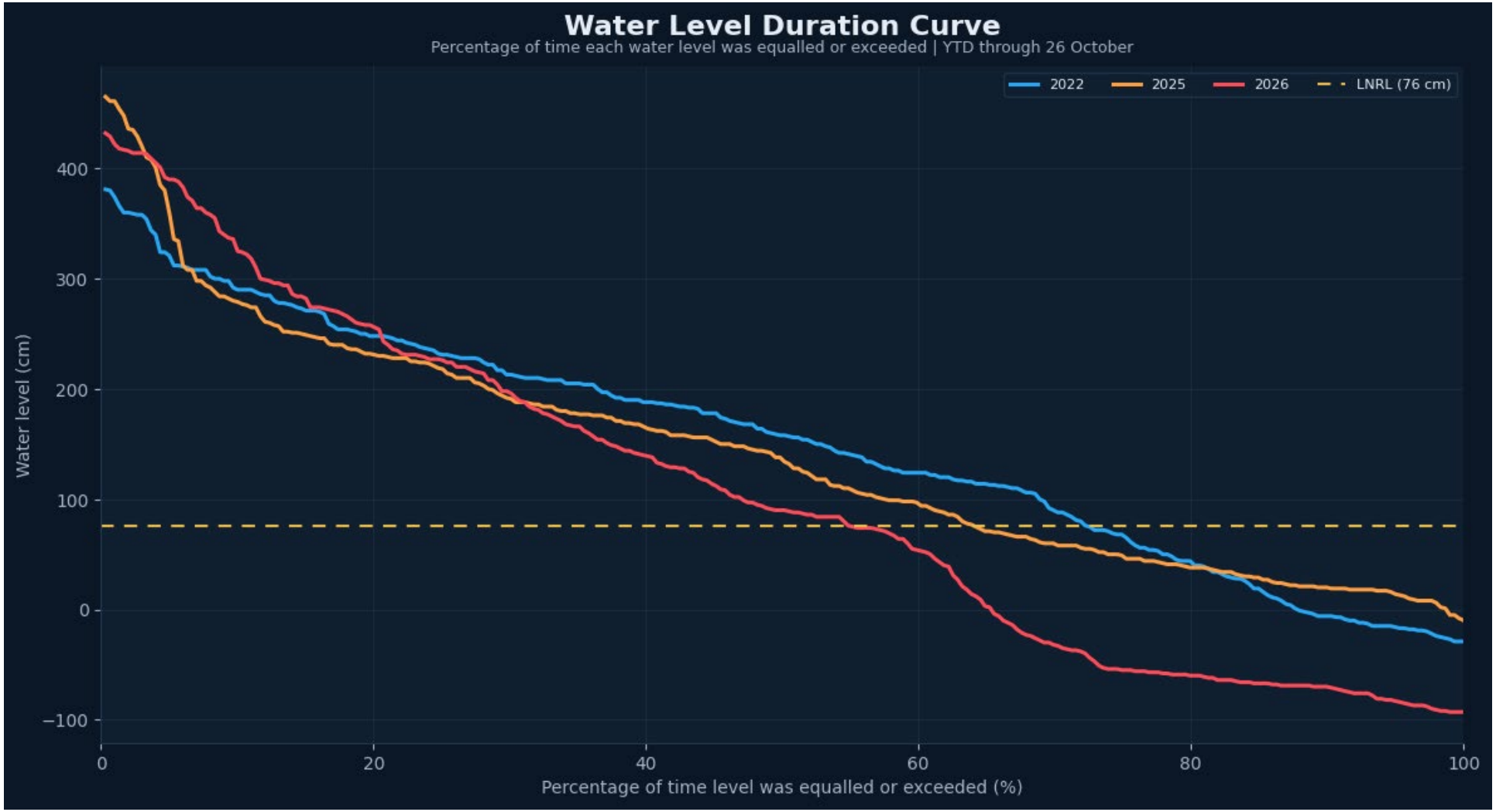
Hydrological conditions on the Danube until October 2026



Hydrological conditions on the Danube until October 2026

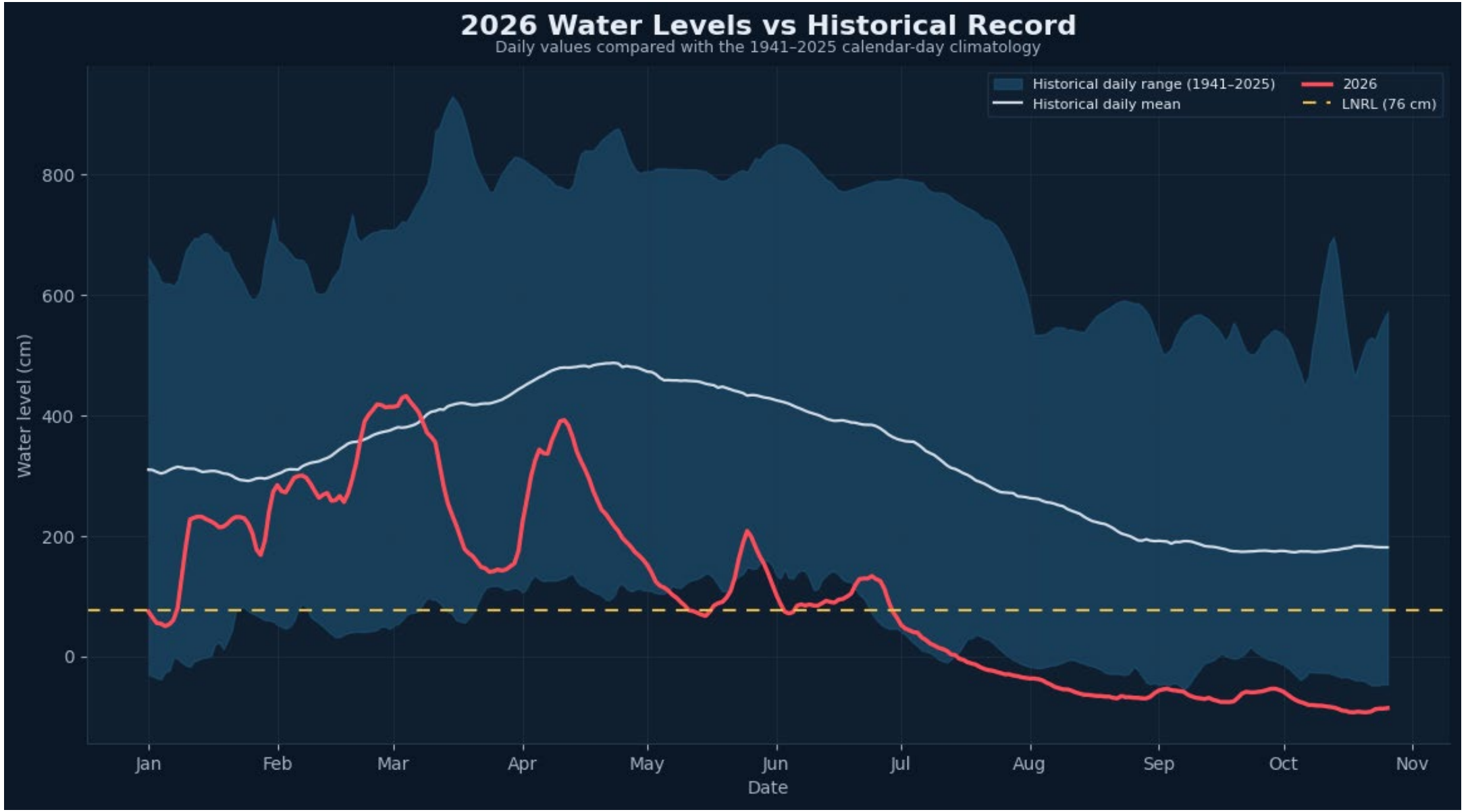


Hydrological conditions on the Danube until October 2026

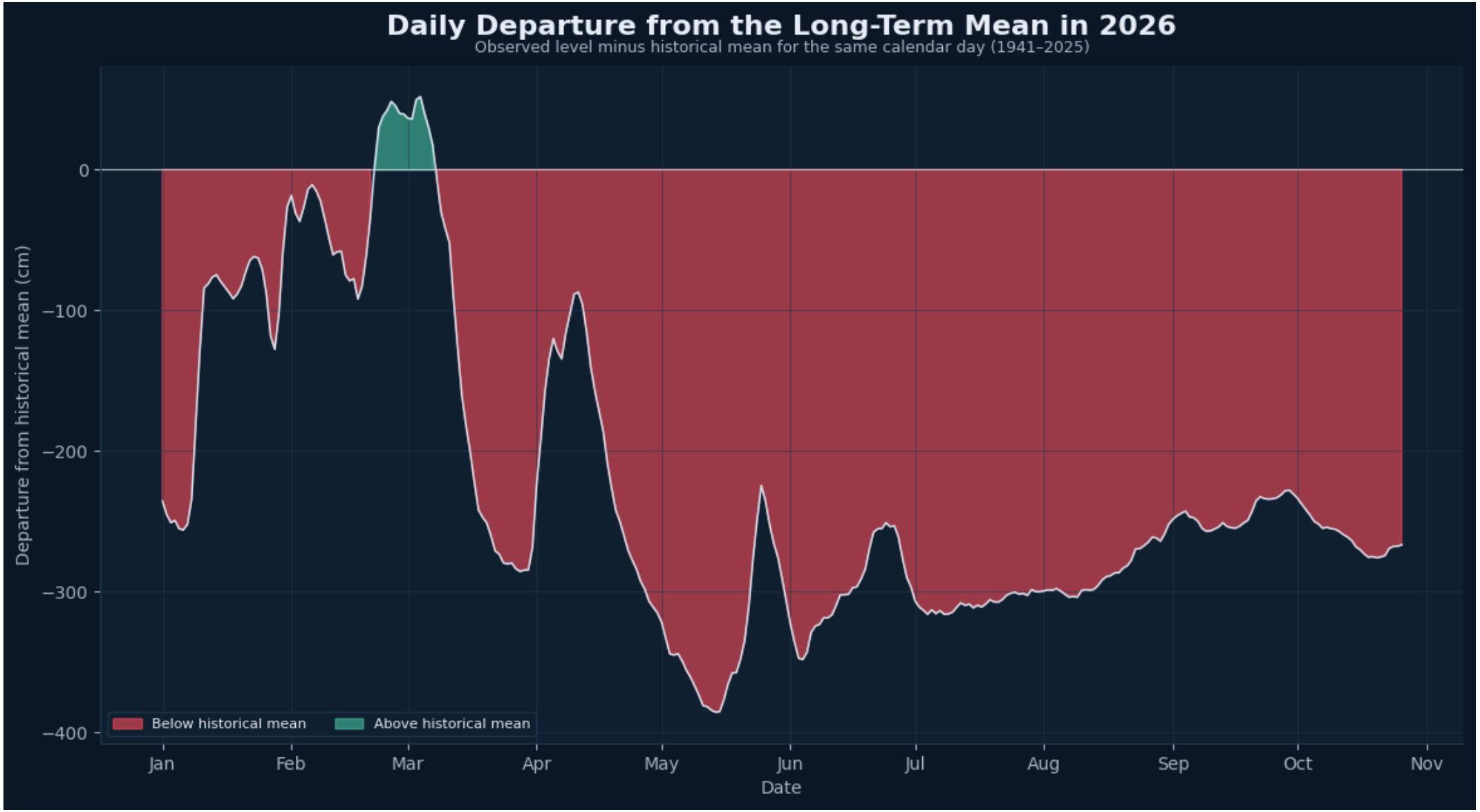


The comparison highlights the seasonal development of water levels in 2026 relative to 2022 and 2025; the dashed line marks the Low Navigation Regulation Level (76 cm).

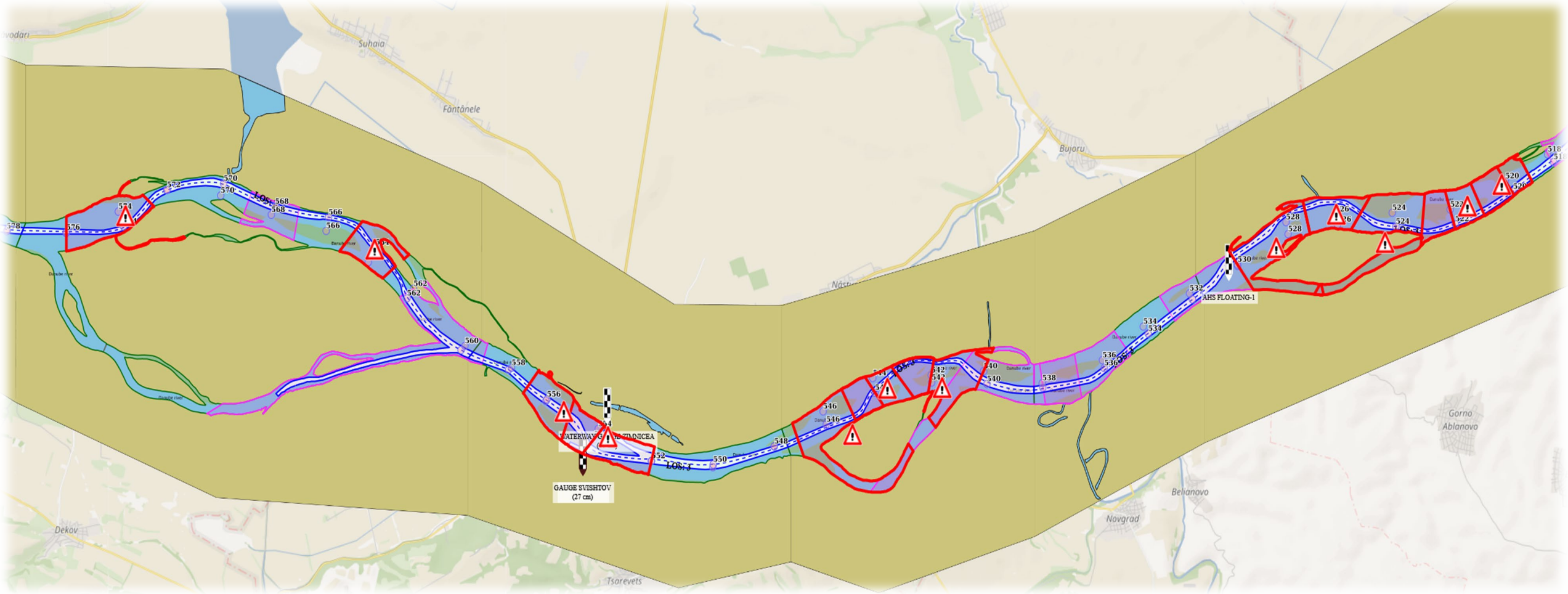
Hydrological conditions on the Danube until October 2026



Hydrological conditions on the Danube until October 2026

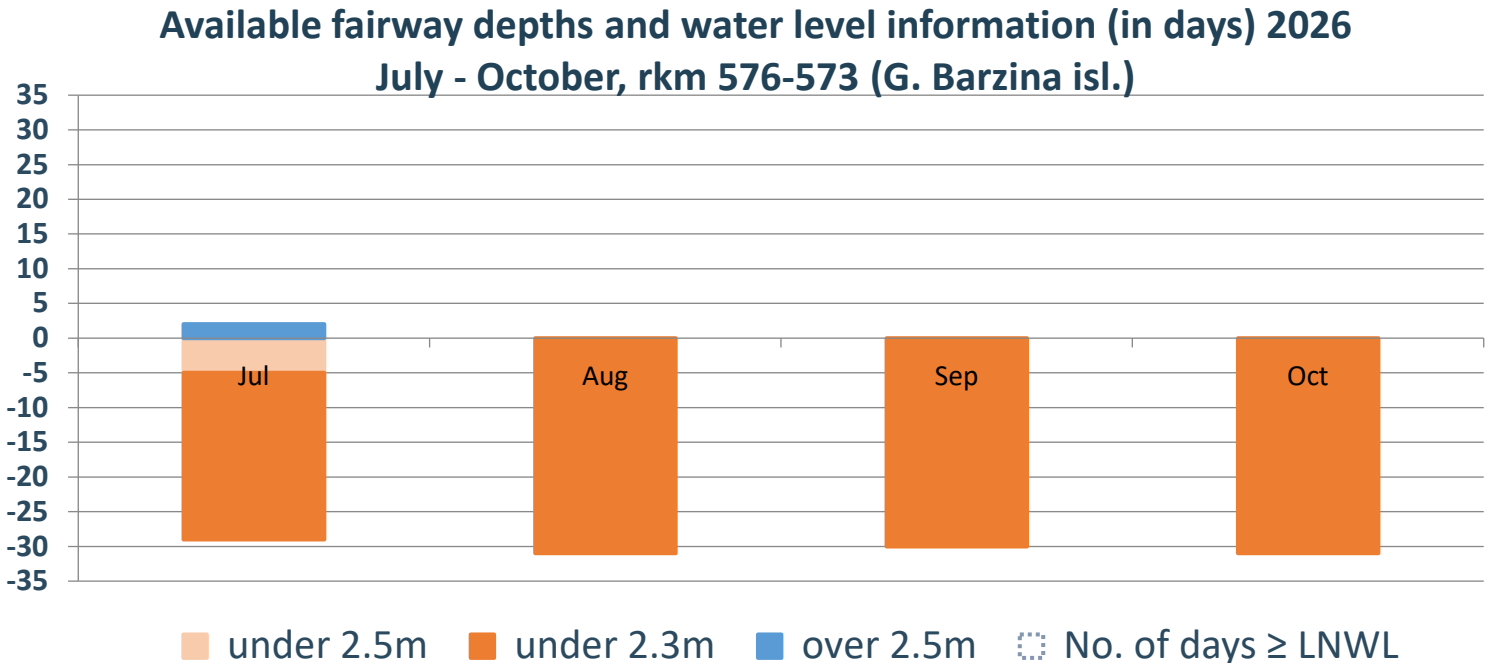


Navigation Conditions on the Danube in July – October 2026



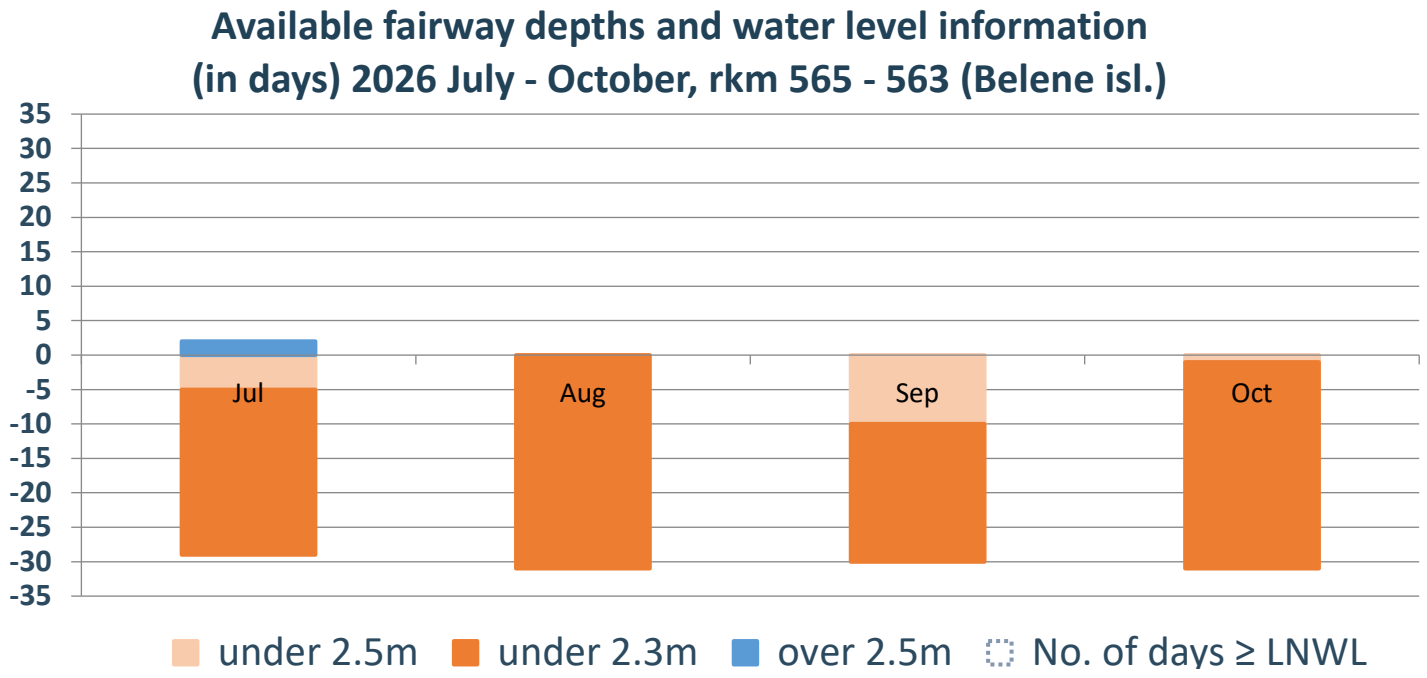
Information about critical sections for period July – October 2026

Available fairway depths (in days), rkm 576-573 (G. Barzina isl.)							
	over 2.5m	under 2.5m	No. of days with 24 dm	No. of days with 23 dm	under 2.3m	under 2.5m	No. of days ≥ LNWL
Jul	2	-29	-3	-2	-24	-5	0
Aug	0	-31	0	0	-31	0	0
Sep	0	-30	0	0	-30	0	0
Oct	0	-31	0	0	-31	0	0



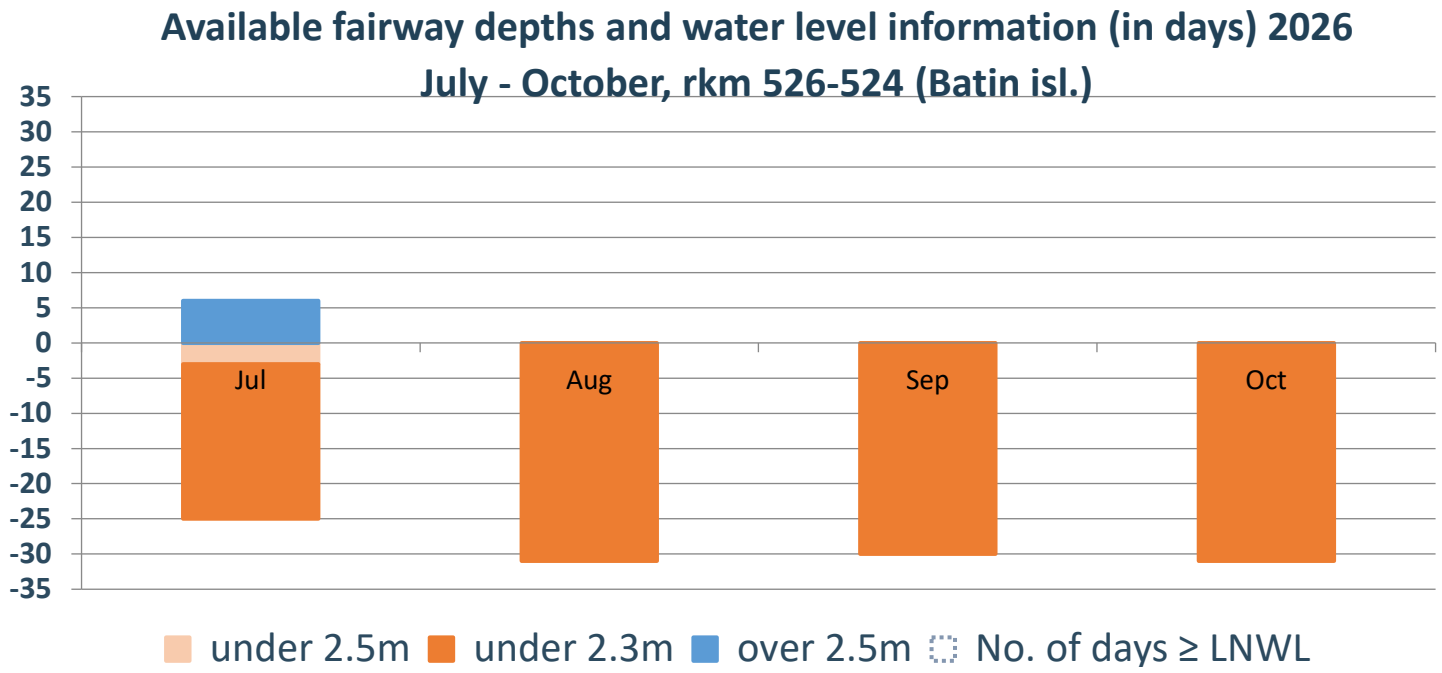
Information about critical sections for period July – October 2026

Available fairway depths (in days), rkm 565 - 563 (Belene isl.)							
	over 2.5m	under 2.5m	No. of days with 24 dm	No. of days with 23 dm	under 2.3m	under 2.5m	No. of days ≥ LNWL
Jul	2	-29	-3	-2	-24	-5	0
Aug	0	-31	0	0	-31	0	0
Sep	0	-30	-2	-8	-20	-10	0
Oct	0	-31	0	-1	-30	-1	0



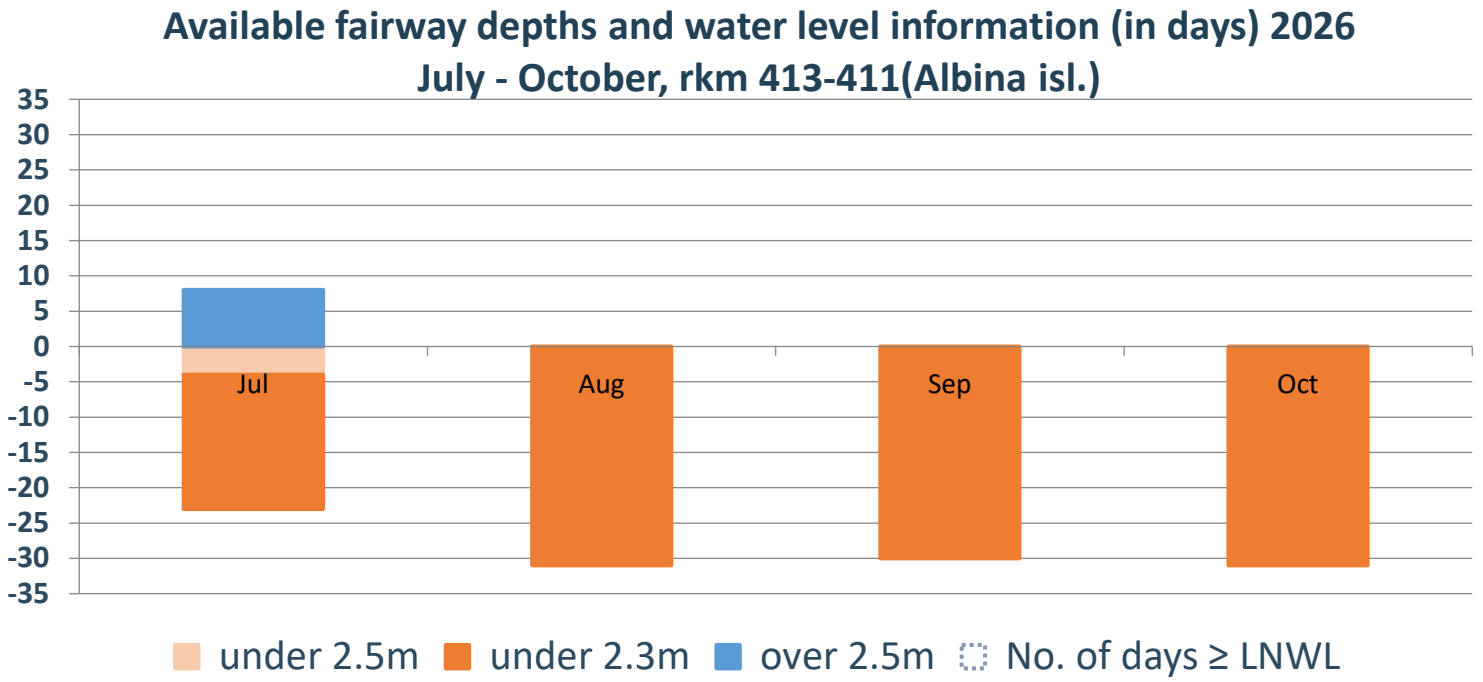
Information about critical sections for period July – October 2026

Available fairway depths (in days), rkm 526-524 (Batin isl.)							
	over 2.5m	under 2.5m	No. of days with 24 dm	No. of days with 23 dm	under 2.3m	under 2.5m	No. of days ≥ LNWL
Jul	6	-25	-1	-2	-22	-3	0
Aug	0	-31	0	0	-31	0	0
Sep	0	-30	0	0	-30	0	0
Oct	0	-31	0	0	-31	0	0

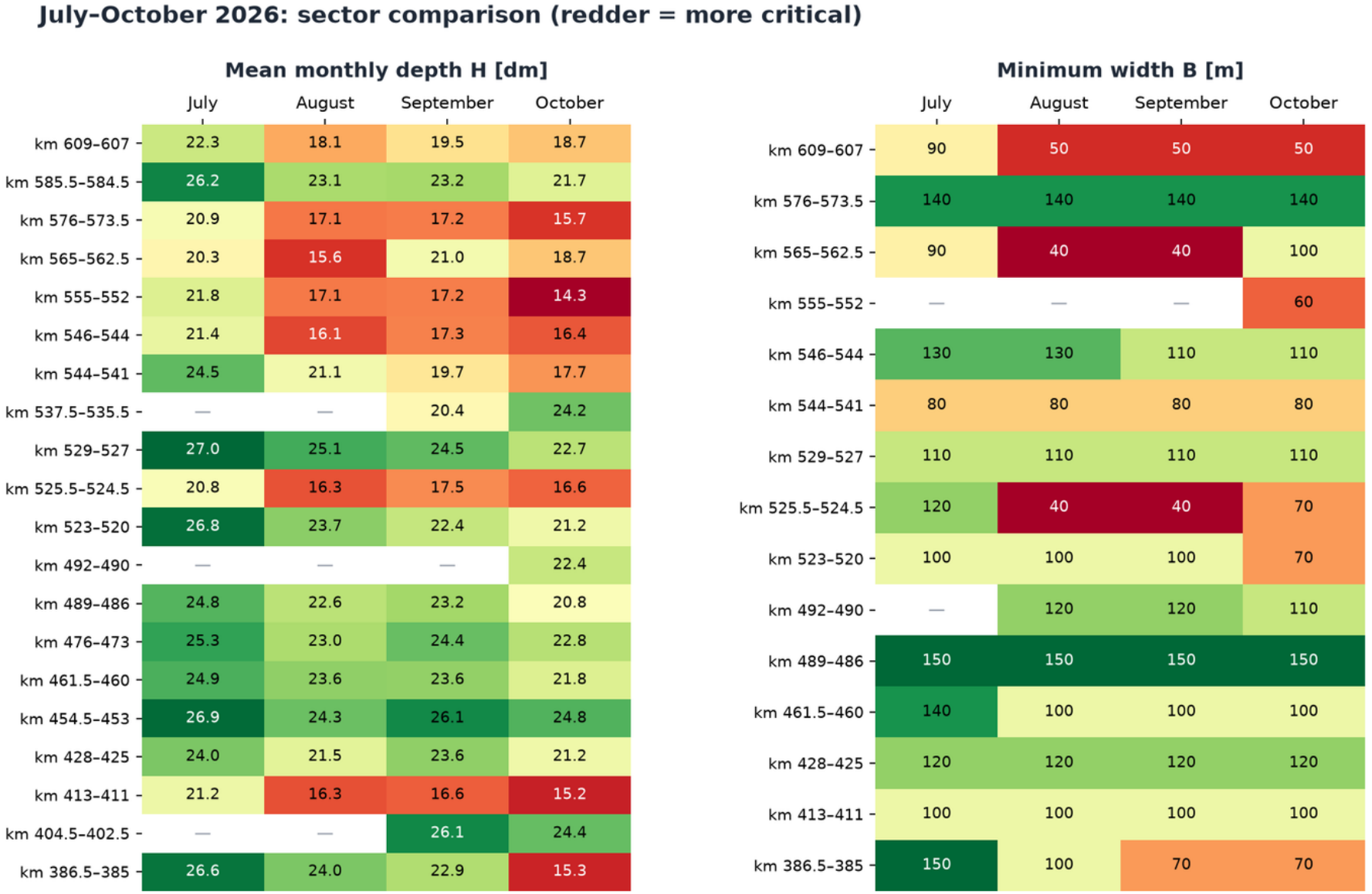


Information about critical sections for period July – October 2026

Available fairway depths (in days), rkm 413 - 411 (Albina Island)							
	over 2.5m	under 2.5m	No. of days with 24 dm	No. of days with 23 dm	under 2.3m	under 2.5m	No. of days ≥ LNWL
Jul	8	-23	-2	-2	-19	-4	0
Aug	0	-31	0	0	-31	0	0
Sep	0	-30	0	0	-30	0	0
Oct	0	-31	0	0	-31	0	0



Comparative analysis of critical sections for period July – October 2026

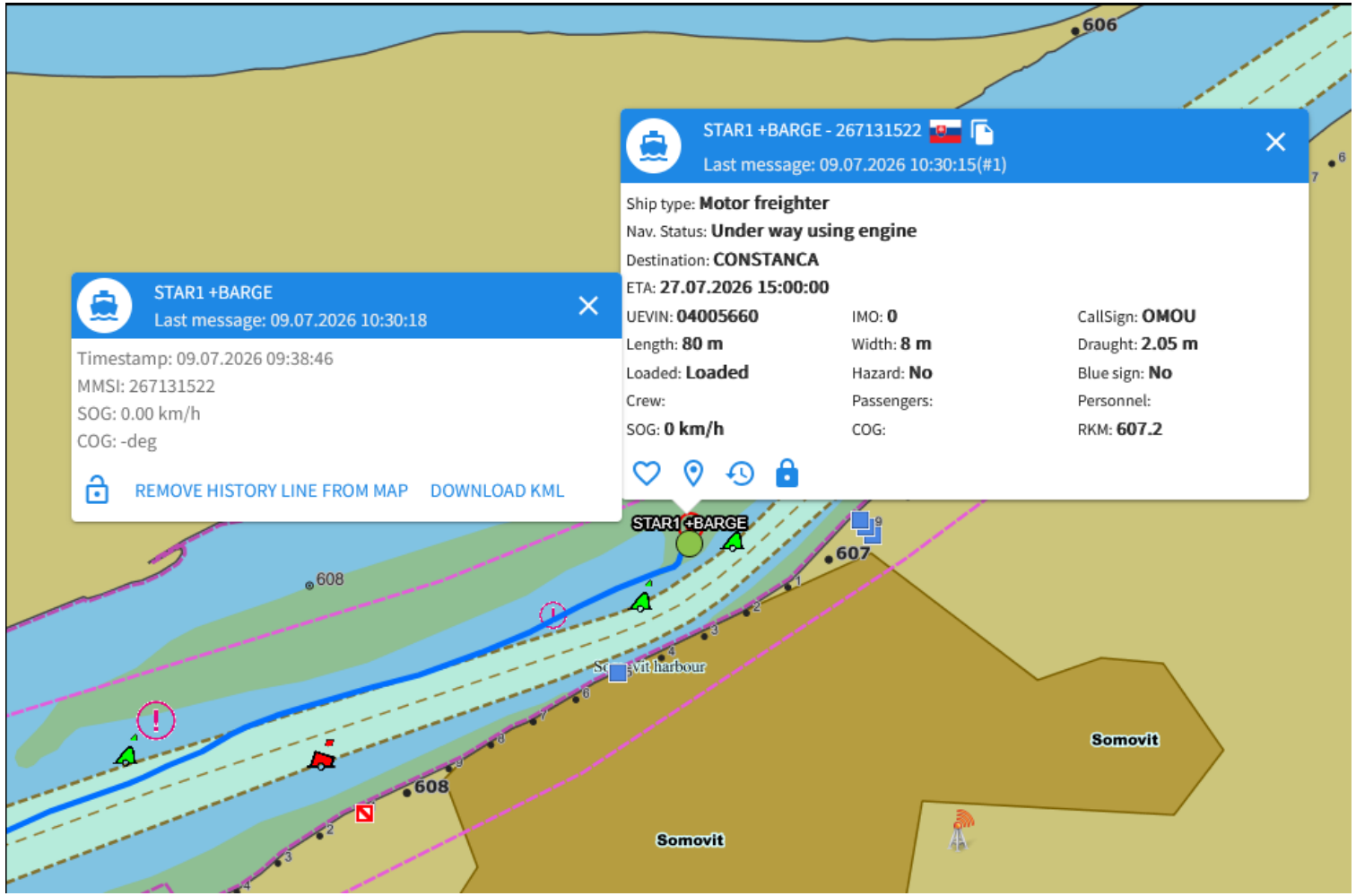


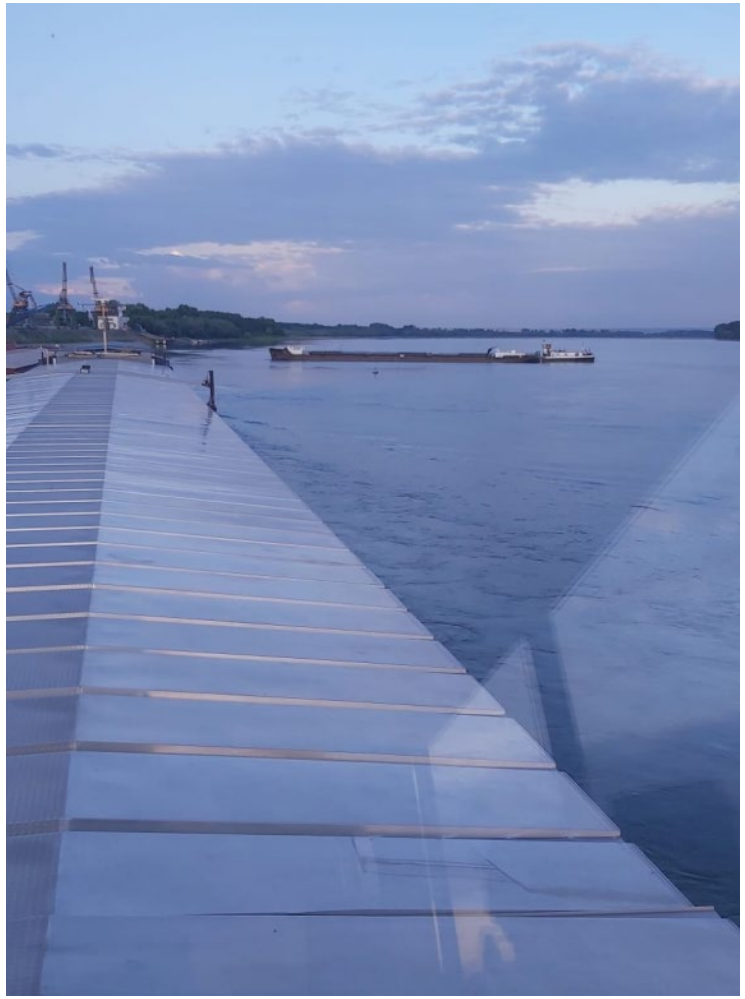
Current information about critical sections as of 06.11.2026

Information of critical sectors on 06.11.2026											
	Reduced to Actual depth					Relative to LNWL					
	Bottlenecks	depth Left , dm	depth middle, dm	depth right, dm	Width (m)	depth Left , dm	depth middle, dm	depth right, dm	Water gauge	ENR	Water Level (cm) 06.11.2026
1	387-385	22.2	20.2	23.2	70	40.6	38.6	41.6	Silistra	80	-78
2	393.5-391	27.2	37.2	34.2	180	45.6	55.6	52.6	Silistra	80	-78
3	400-398	27.2	36.2	57.2	190	45.6	54.6	75.6	Silistra	80	-78
4	404-401.5	24.2	30.2	20.2	200	42.6	48.6	38.6	Silistra	80	-78
5	413-411	17.2	20.2	17.2	100	35.6	38.6	35.6	Silistra	80	-78
6	428-425	26.2	26.2	22.2	120	44.6	44.6	40.6	Silistra	80	-78
7	455-453	33.4	30.4	21.4	180	46.3	43.3	34.3	Ruse	53	-76
8	462-460	23.4	27.4	22.4	100	36.3	40.3	35.3	Ruse	53	-76
9	476-474	26.4	28.4	23.4	180	39.3	41.3	36.3	Ruse	53	-76
10	489-486	23.4		23.4	150	36.3		36.3	Ruse	53	-76
11	523-520	23.4	27.4	34.4	70	36.3	40.3	47.3	Ruse	53	-76
12	526-524	23.4	22.4	22.4	70	36.3	35.3	35.3	Ruse	53	-76
13	529-527	32.2	27.2	23.2	110	43.6	38.6	34.6	Svishtov	76	-38
14	539-537	28.2	23.2	22.2	140	39.6	34.6	33.6	Svishtov	76	-38
15	544-541	22.2	22.2	21.2	80	33.6	33.6	32.6	Svishtov	76	-38
16	546-544	23.2	21.2	19.2	110	34.6	32.6	30.6	Svishtov	76	-38
17	555-552	18.2	18.2	18.2	80	29.6	29.6	29.6	Svishtov	76	-38
18	565-562.5	23.2	23.2	21.2	100	34.6	34.6	32.6	Svishtov	76	-38
19	576-573.5	20.2	20.2	18.2	140	31.6	31.6	29.6	Svishtov	76	-38
20	586-584	24.2	26.2	25.2	180	35.6	37.6	36.6	Svishtov	76	-38
21	609.5-606.5	22.2	23.2	22.2	60	33.6	34.6	33.6	Svishtov	76	-38

m/s STAR 1: 09 Jul 2026 – Grounding Incident (rkm 609–607, port Somovit)

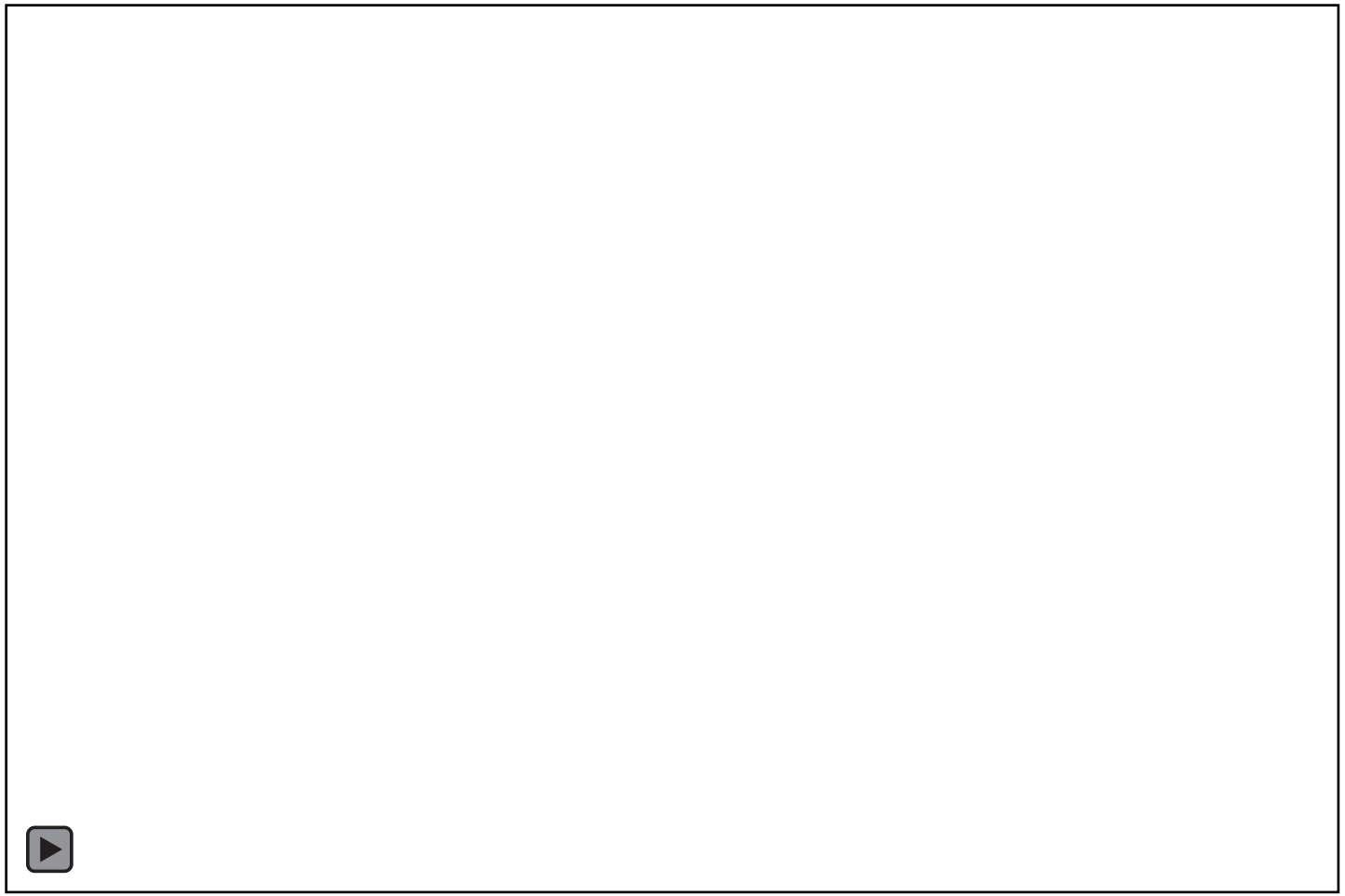
M/s *Star 1 with convoy from 1 barge (draught 2.05 m)* grounded on rkm. 607.200 and blocked the fairway.





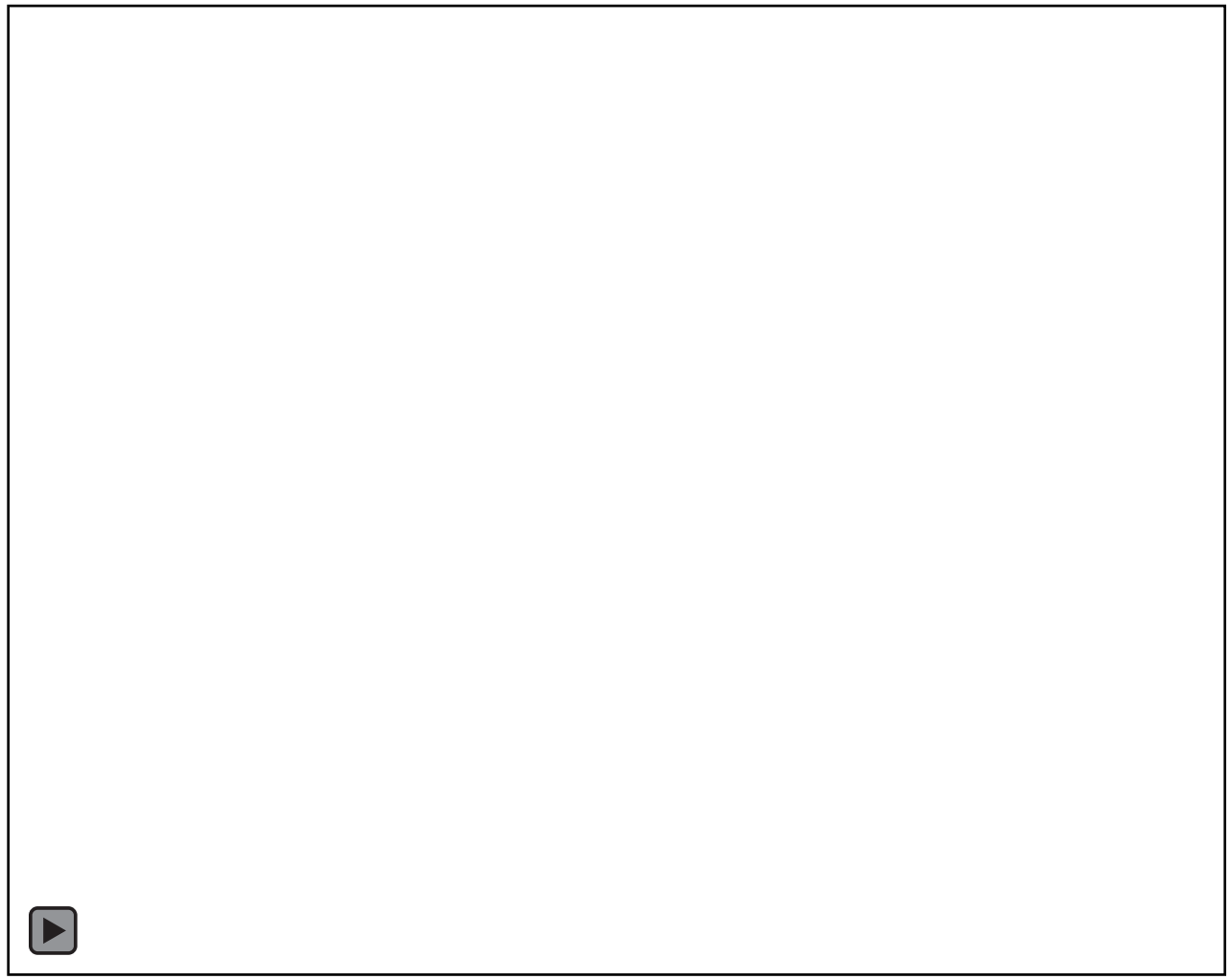
m/s EINIGKEIT: 13 Jul 2026 – Grounding Incident
(rkm 413–411, Albina Island)

M/s *Einigkeit with convoy from 2 barges (draught 2.35 m)* grounded on rkm. 412.000 and blocked the fairway.
(RIS Report No. 158)



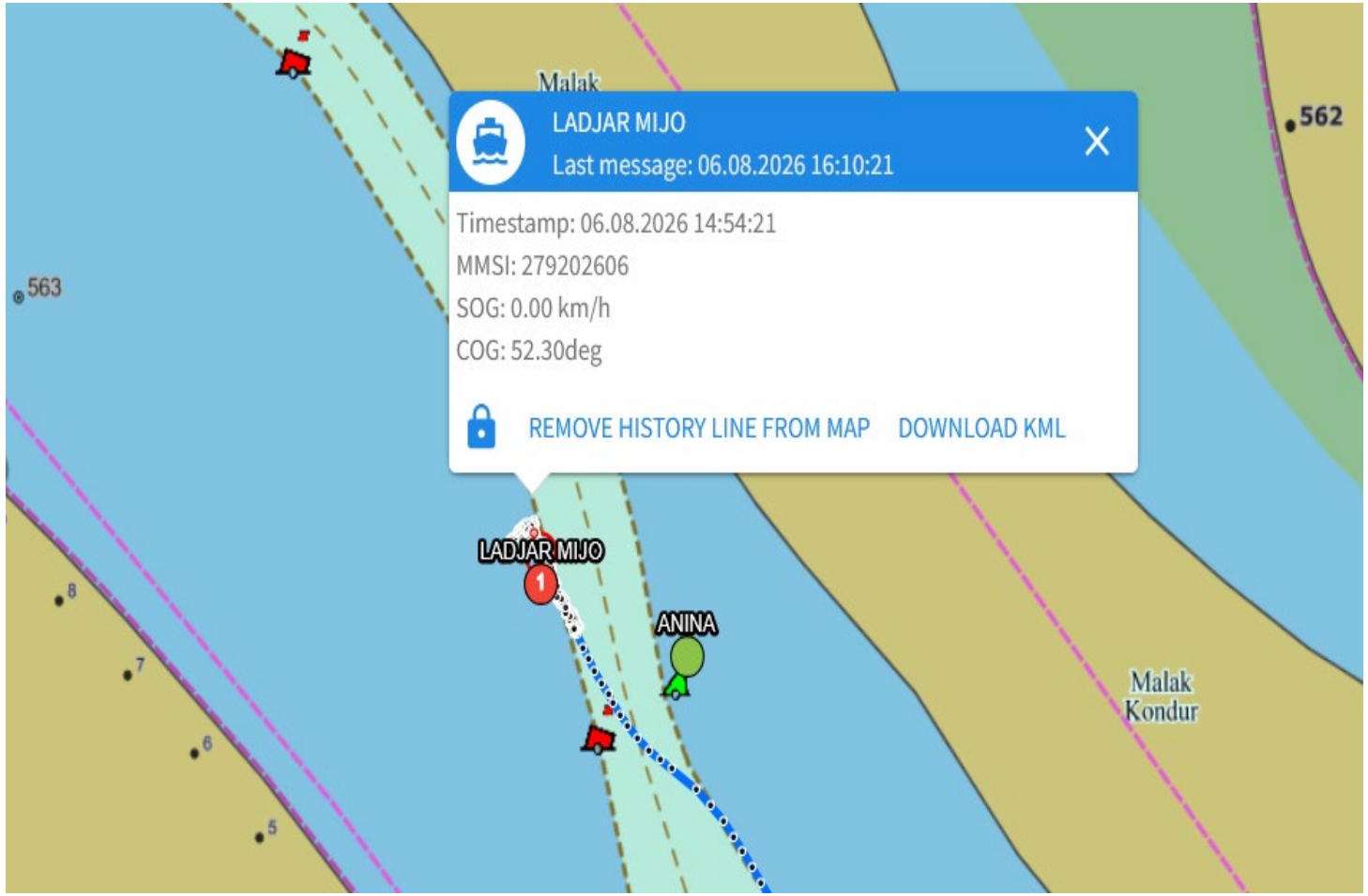
m/s ANINA: 28 Jul 2026 – Grounding Incident
(rkm 565–562, Belene Island)

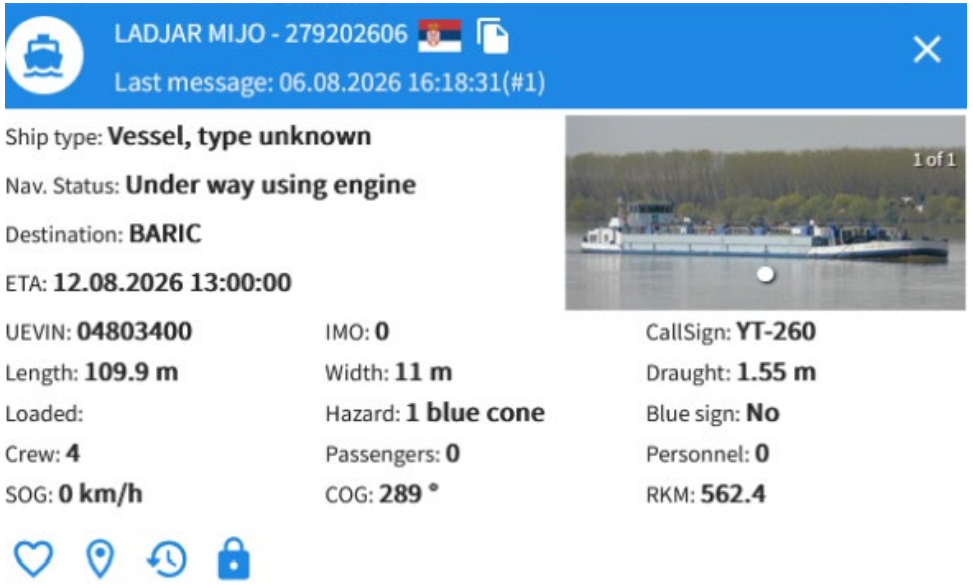
M/s *Anina with convoy from 4 barges (draught 1.80 m)* grounded on rkm. 562.400 out of the fairway.



m/t LADJAR MIO: 06 Aug 2026 – Grounding Incident
(rkm 565–562, Belene Island)

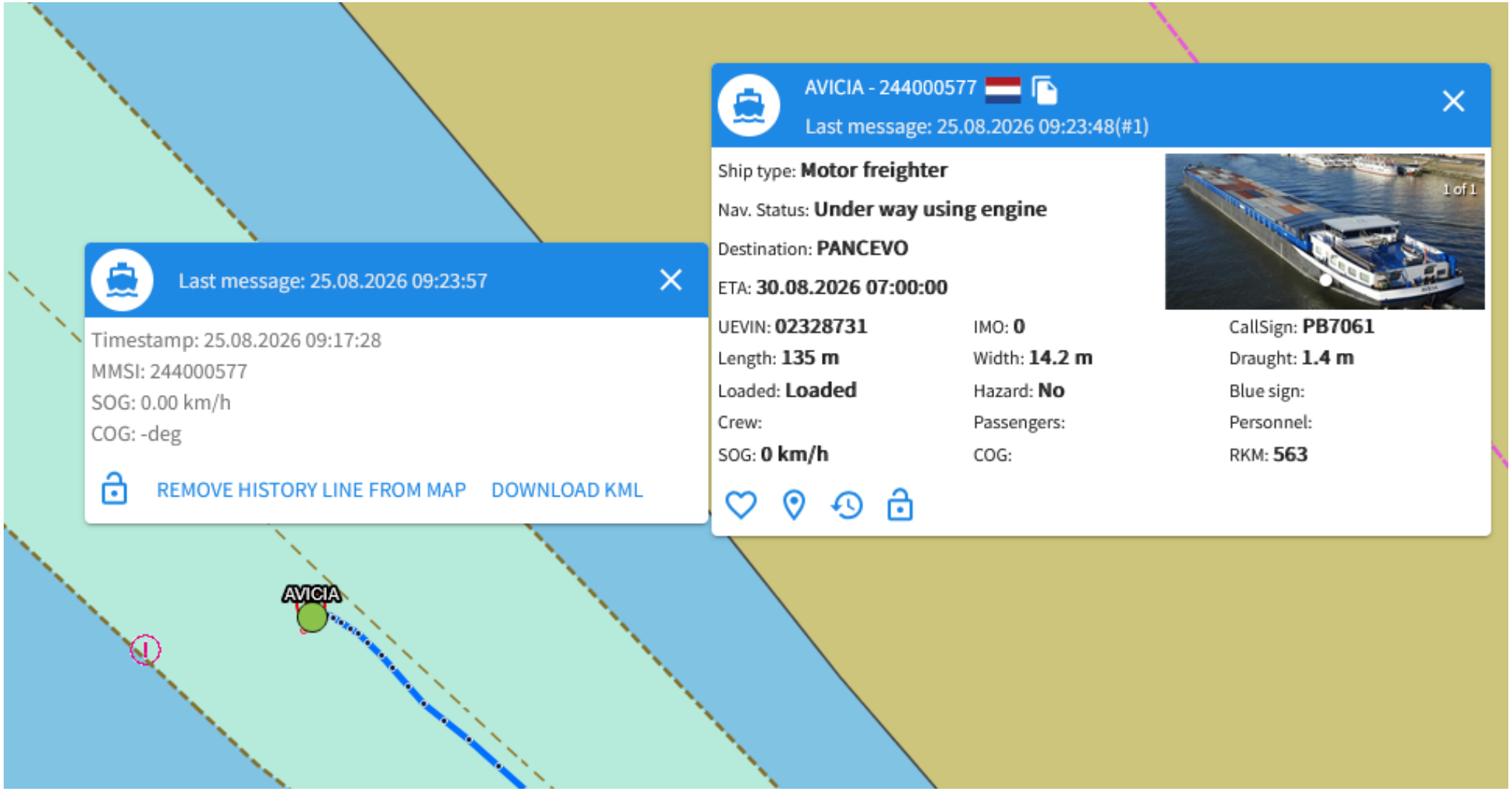
M/t *Ladjar Mio with cargo from 380 t diesel oil (draught 1.55 m)* grounded on rkm. 562.400 and blocked the fairway.
(RIS Report No. 179)





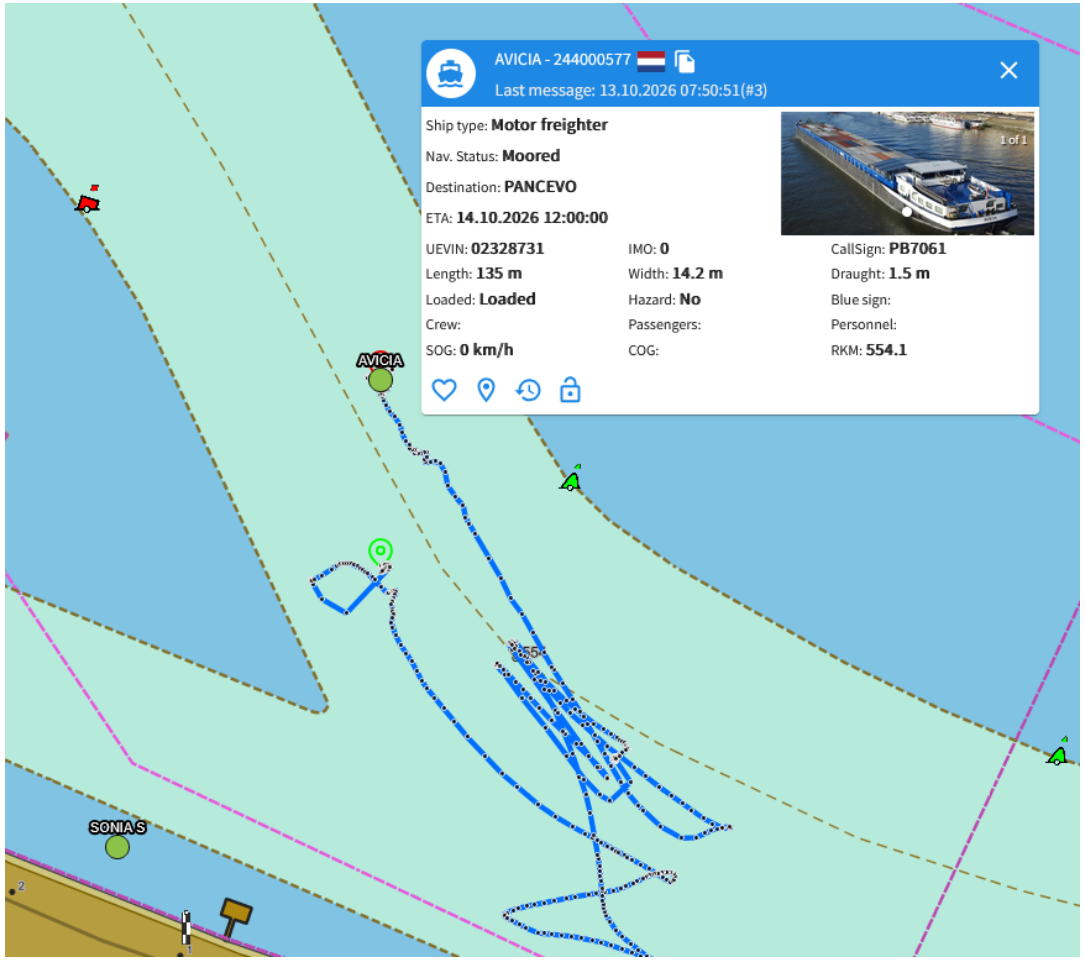
m/s AVICIA: 16 Oct 2026 – Grounding Incident
(rkm 565–562, Belene Island)

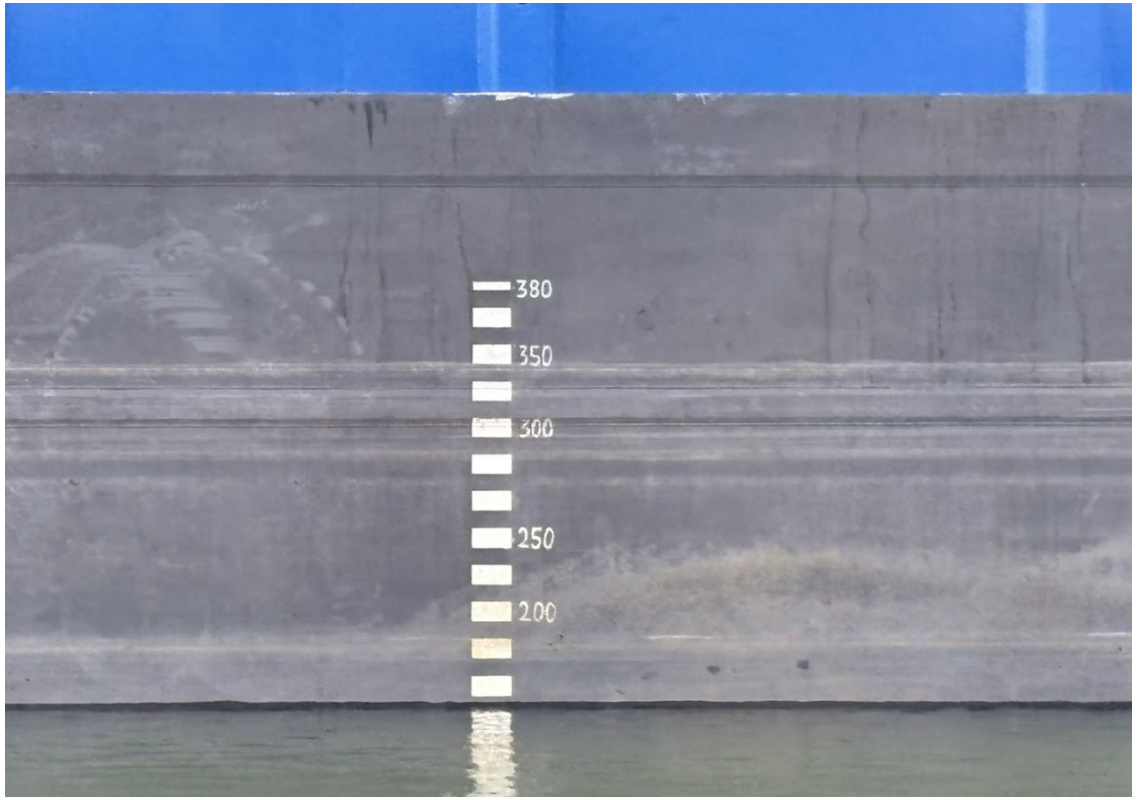
M/s *Avicia (draught 1.40 m) real draught 1.80* grounded on rkm. 563.200 and blocked the fairway.



m/s AVICIA: 12 Oct 2026 – Grounding Incident
(rkm 555–552, port Svishtov)

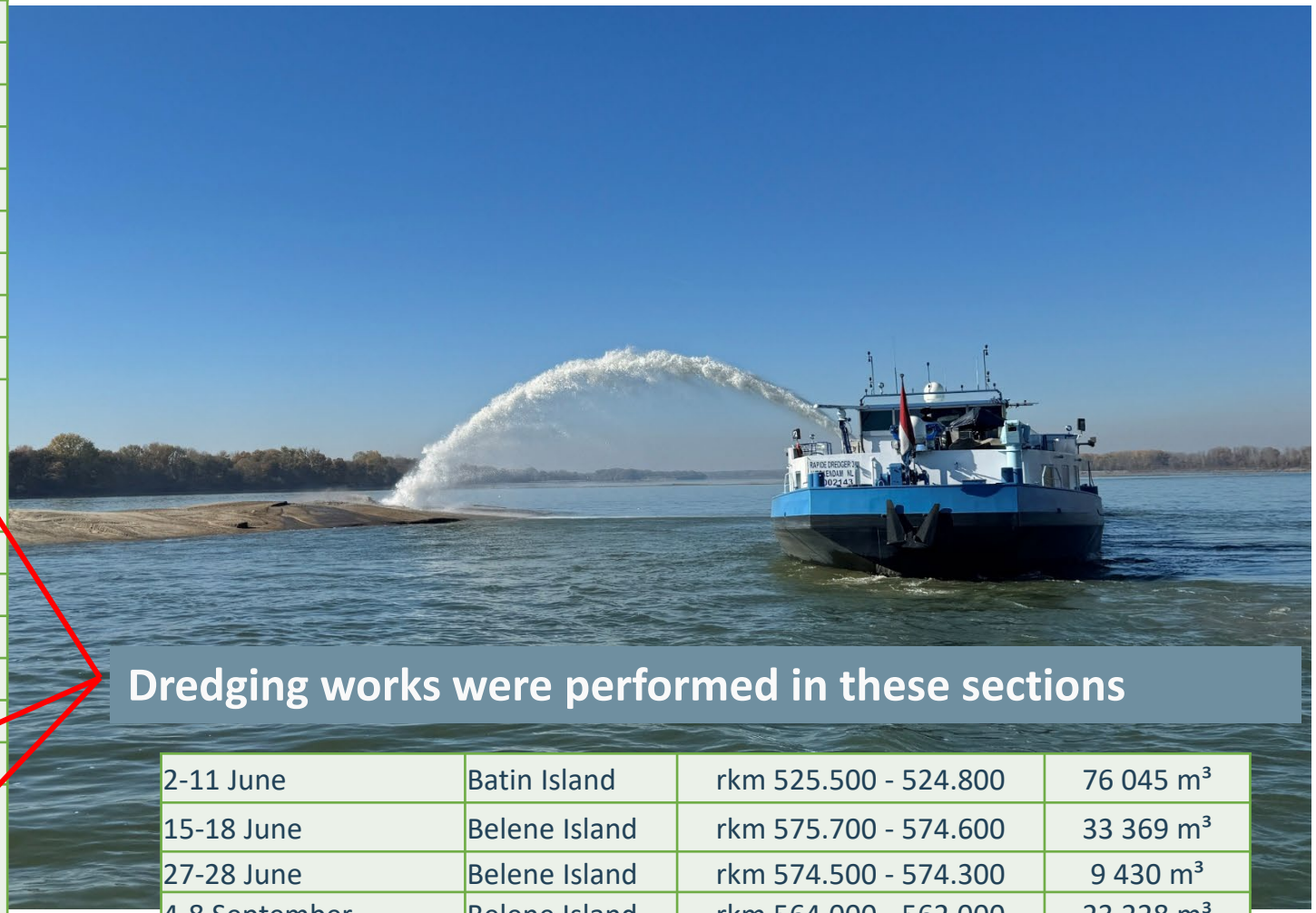
M/s *Avicia (draught 1.5 m) real draught 1.80* grounded on rkm. 554.100 and blocked the fairway.
(RIS Report No. 214)





Dredging activities 2026

Critical sections	Water gauge	Date	Days < 25dm relative to LNWL
387-385	Silistra +80cm	-	0
393.5-391	Silistra +80cm	-	0
400 -398	Silistra +80cm	-	0
404.5-401.5	Silistra +80cm	-	0
413-411	Silistra +80cm	-	0
428-425	Silistra +80cm	-	0
455-453	Ruse +53cm	-	0
462-460	Ruse +53cm	-	0
476-472.5	Ruse +53cm	-	0
490-487.5	Ruse +53cm	-	0
523-520	Ruse +53cm	-	0
526-524	Ruse +53cm	19.05.2026 20-21.05.2026 03.06.2026 07.06.2026	5
529-527	Svishtov +76cm	-	0
537.5-535.5	Svishtov +76cm	-	0
544-541	Svishtov +76cm	-	0
546-544	Svishtov +76cm	-	0
555-552.5	Svishtov +76cm	-	0
565-562	Svishtov +76cm	-	0
576-573.5	Svishtov +76cm	17.05.2026 03.06.2026 06-08.06.2026 10-11.06.2026	7
586-584	Svishtov +76cm	-	0
609-606.5	Svishtov +76cm	-	0



Dredging works were performed in these sections

2-11 June	Batin Island	rkm 525.500 - 524.800	76 045 m³
15-18 June	Belene Island	rkm 575.700 - 574.600	33 369 m³
27-28 June	Belene Island	rkm 574.500 - 574.300	9 430 m³
4-8 September	Belene Island	rkm 564.000 - 562.000	23 228 m³
9-14 September	Batin Island	rkm 525.600 - 524.700	20 025 m³
28-29 September	Somovit	rkm 607.100 - 606.500	11 248 m³



Navigation fairway maintenance activities for period July – October 2026

CONCLUSIONS

- Change fairway trajectory – 4 times;
- Increasing the number of floating navigation signs – 20 coastal lighthouses, 95 floating non-illuminated buoys, 51 floating illuminated buoys and 734 coastal signs;
- Increasing the number of hydrographic trip with m/s “Dunav 1”, speed boat Rs 2070 and specialized hydrographic boat;
- Increasing the number of marking trip with m/s Osam.

In conclusion, through these activities, the EAEMDR has ensured the passage of vessels with a draft of up to 1.40 m at 1.80 m below the LNWL and has prevented any prolonged closures of the fairway during this period; there have been no official prohibitions resulting in a permanent suspension of navigation, despite record-low water levels on the Danube River.

Next steps

A working group has been established to amend the regulatory framework concerning navigation on the Danube River.



Thank you for the attention!

Ivelin Zanev, PhDEng
Executive director

10-12 November 2026

Executive Agency
EXPLORATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE DANUBE RIVER