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Israel-Jordan Water Pipeline Plan Shelved Building committee cites potential harm to efforts to rehabilitate Jordan River

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A local planning and building committee has voted down a proposal to build a pipeline for sending water from Israel to Jordan, arguing that the pipeline is liable to undermine efforts to rehabilitate the Jordan River.

However, an appeals committee will probably review the decision and may overturn it. The pipeline proposal was submitted to the Jordan Valley Planning and Building Committee by the Mekorot water company. But it was fiercely opposed by local residents and environmental groups.

The environmentalists argued that the water should instead be made available to Jordan by pumping it into the Jordan River. The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, for instance, told the planning committee that while it didn't object to the idea of sending water to Jordan, the pipeline would undermine the goal of rehabilitating the river by increasing the amount of water flowing through it. SPNI official Giora Shaham argued that providing water via the river would keep the water fresh and also allow the supply to be increased easily if necessary.

The planning committee agreed, citing both this argument and the area's development needs in its decision to reject the proposal. It also said the Water Authority should have examined the possibility of providing water via the river before approving the pipeline. The Water Authority responded that it had "reached the conclusion that combining the Jordan's rehabilitation with sending water to the Kingdom of Jordan is impossible." This conclusion was reached only after in-depth study, "including an examination of the international risks this [option] would entail," it said.

The Water Authority added that the second stage of its plan to rehabilitate the Jordan is already prepared and is now in the process of being approved.