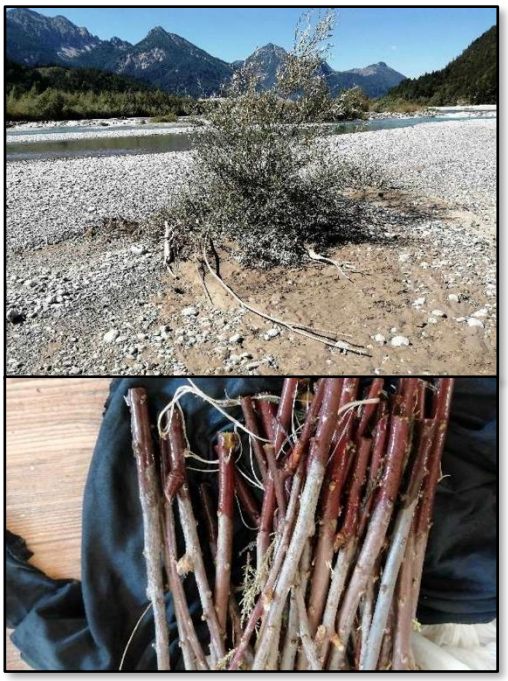
LECHFORSCHUNG 2050+
Gesellschaft für Naturschutz-, Gewässer- und Gebirgsökosystemforschung

The year 2025 for Lech Research 2050+:

Update on ongoing research projects

Reintroduction *Myricaria germanica* (2024-2026)

In 2025, the reintroduction project for the German tamarisk (*Myricaria germanica*) on the Lech River was consistently continued. Seeds and cuttings from donor plants were once again obtained in the Lech Valley and prepared for further cultivation. As the germination rate of the seeds collected to date was limited, additional seeds were obtained to ensure sufficient plant material for the coming project period. At the same time, new planting trials with cuttings were carried out. Improved, protected locations below the Beirer gravel plant and on a comparison section near Rieden were selected for this purpose. The experience gained in 2025 shows that the site conditions remain challenging and provides important insights for further action. The first two-year-old young plants are planned to be planted in 2026 in order to increase the chances of successful reintroduction.



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Extension of initial financing Land Tirol (2023 - 2026)

A cost-neutral extension of Lechforschung2050+ for further twelve months until the end of 2026 has been approved to provide start-up funding. The extension was requested in order to implement essential project components in full and in the planned quality, and to coordinate the delayed rental of the research station with the project duration. In addition, the option of an additional interim invoice for October 2025 was offered. *Lechforschung2050+* took advantage of this offer. The submitted documents are still being reviewed.

New & submitted research projects

Noah's Ark Tyrolean Lech - Stone Crayfish and Natterjack Toad (2025 - 2029)

A funding framework for five years (2025-2029) amounting to €75,000 has been approved for the project “Noah's Ark Tyrolean Lech - Stone Crayfish and Natterjack Toad.” Payments will be made annually once the implementation of the planned measures has been verified. The aim

of the project is to protect the highly endangered Natterjack Toad (*Epidalea calamita*) and the stone crayfish (*Austropotamobius torrentium*) through a combination of breeding measures and the development of a reintroduction plan on the Tyrolean Lech. This is based on the amphibian habitats created as part of earlier LIFE Lech projects and the relict populations of crayfish found in neighbouring waters. A key step was already taken in 2025: the search for a location for the planned breeding facility was successfully completed. The selected site is located on the edge of the Tyrolean Lech Natura 2000 area, near restored amphibian ponds. The planning application under nature conservation law is currently being prepared. Initial assessments show that the construction of the facility is not expected to have any significant impact on valuable nature conservation assets. In addition, the project was presented to the public at a municipal council meeting in the municipality of Reutte.

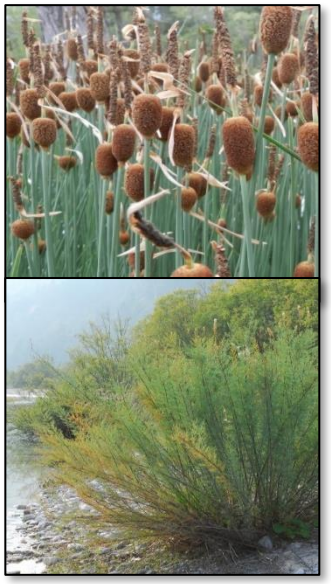
In 2026, the nature conservation documents will be submitted, coordination with authorities and experts will take place, and the existing habitats will be reviewed. The breeding facility is scheduled to go into operation in March 2026.

Grouse - Monitoring 2026

Grouse are adapted to alpine habitats, but are sensitive to changes in their habitat caused by human use, disturbances, and climate change. To ensure their long-term survival, they have been monitored regularly in Tyrol since 2011. A bid has been submitted to the Province of Tyrol for mapping in 2026 for grouse monitoring in reference area 1 “Brandenberg-Achental West.” This includes mapping capercaillies and black grouse, as well as genetic analyses and mating ground counts.

Noah's Ark Tyrolean Lech - Dwarf bulrush and German tamarisk

After a long period of preparation, the project “Noah's Ark Tyrolean Lech - Dwarf Cattail and German Tamarisk” was submitted to the Province of Tyrol for funding at the beginning of December. The aim is to record the genetic status of the dwarf cattail (*Typha minima*) and the German tamarisk (*Myricaria germanica*) on the Tyrolean Lech and, based on this, to create a sound foundation for future measures to support and reintroduce these species. Despite extensive renaturation efforts, the populations of both flagship species are small and isolated, posing a threat of genetic impoverishment. The project involves genetic analyses of existing populations, the selection of genetically suitable planting material, and initial cultivation in a local breeding station. In addition, suitable habitats will be evaluated and concepts for distribution and repopulation will be developed. The particular added value of the project lies in the combination of genetic studies and fact-based site evaluation as a basis for future species conservation measures.



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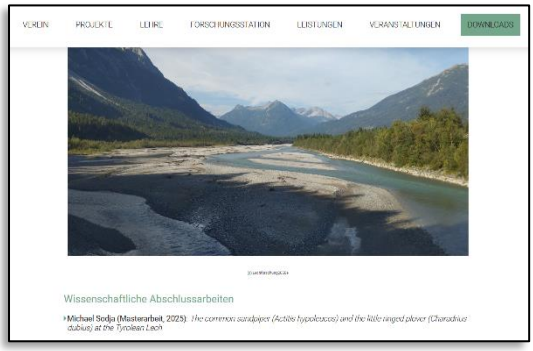
Supervised scientific thesis



The first master's thesis supervised as part of *Lechforschung2050+* has been successfully completed. Michael Sodja wrote the thesis entitled "The common sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) and the little ringed plover (*Charadrius dubius*) at the Tyrolean Lech," which is already available for download on our website. It provides valuable insights into the population development and effects of river restoration measures on common sandpipers and little ringed plovers on the Tyrolean Lech. The thesis was written at the University of Innsbruck and supervised by Reinhard Lentner.

Changes to the Board of Directors and Management

There were personnel changes at *Lechforschung 2050+* in 2025: Sandra Schallhart took over as managing director in November. We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to Georg Niedrist for his great commitment and valuable work!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In addition, Peter Huemer has stepped down from the board at his own request as representative of the Tyrolean State Museums, as he has retired. We would also like to thank him for his many years of support and cooperation. Evelyn Kustatscher has been appointed to the board as the new representative of the Tyrolean State Museums and elected as deputy secretary.

Selection & moving into the new research centre

After a long search, we were able to reach an important milestone in 2025. Lechforschung2050+ moved into its new research center in the former Franciscan monastery in Reutte. On September 18, the association was presented at a municipal council meeting of the municipality of Reutte. The official handover of the keys to the new office premises took place on November 28 and was accompanied by a press release. The building, which is owned by the Diocese of Innsbruck, will undergo extensive renovation until 2027.

During the transition period, *Lechforschung2050+* will have access to an office, kitchen, and, upon request, a seminar room. Work on furnishing the premises has already begun. Full operation and an official opening celebration are planned for October 2027.

Other

Our website was also further developed and expanded in terms of content in 2025. New information on ongoing projects and the new research center was added. In addition, a separate download area is now available, where completed master's theses, among other things, are made publicly accessible.

In addition, Georg Niedrist took part in the international seminar “Braided Rivers & The Tagliamento” in Spilimbergo (Italy) in June. There he gave an exciting lecture on “Restoration and research at the Tyrolean Lech - The largest braided river in the Northern Alps.” The lecture aroused great interest and received numerous inquiries, including about Lechforschung2050+.

Annual plan for 2026

- Adaptation of office/research centre
- Hiring of support staff for administrative office
- Workshop on logo, opening, and social media in March 2026
- Digitization of the Lech Valley study
- Courses & excursions (modules offered on website)
- Course: EU Renaturation Regulation in practice (max. 15 people)
- Course: Nature conservation in the EU and the WFD (max. 15 people)
- Action week: Excursion “Research on the Lech” (max. 10 people)
- Book project “My Lech”
- 2 routes for breeding bird monitoring
- Interreg Project Citril finch

We thank you for your support and look forward to a successful 2026!