

# China releases Yangtze environmental protection plan

The Chinese government has released an environmental protection plan covering the Yangtze River Economic Belt, the latest move to protect the country's longest river from pollution.

The plan was jointly released by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Water Resources.

It places an upper limit on the usage of water resources along the belt, said Zhao Yingmin, vice minister of environmental protection.

An ecological "red line" will be put in place to protect and restore the environment of key areas, Zhao said.

This is in line with government guidelines issued earlier this year on a nationwide ecological "red line" strategy that will place certain regions under mandatory and rigorous protection.

Water quality management will be based on a "bottom line" system to strengthen controls on pollution along the belt, especially at drinking water sources, according to Zhao.

The plan also demands improved responses to environmental emergencies and closer regional coordination, he said.

Stretching from southwest China's Yunnan Province to Shanghai, the Yangtze River Economic Belt covers nine provinces and two municipalities in an area of 2.05 million square kilometers.

In 2014, China made developing the economic belt a national strategy. The move was expected to boost development in riverside regions and provide new growth stimuli for China's slowing economy.

Authorities have stressed that environmental protection should be a priority in the development of the belt, which accounts for more than 40 percent of the country's population and economic aggregate.