



Press Information

Jutta Neumann
Press Relations Officer
Fon +49.7723.920-2734

jutta.neumann@hs-furtwangen.de
28.7.2014

“Rheines Wasser” project starts in the Swiss Alps Chemistry professor begins 1,231 km long Rhine marathon swim and unique research project

As expected, when Andreas Fath, a Furtwangen University (HFU) professor of Physical and Analytical Chemistry specializing in Ecological Engineering, tested the waters of Lake Toma at 11 o'clock this morning, the water temperature was an icy 7°C. “Well at least there is no ice,” laughed the Chemistry PhD and passionate competitive swimmer as he climbed out of the water. “The last time I was here at the beginning of June it was a bit different. Still I’m glad Lake Toma is only about 340 metres long and now I can get on my mountain bike for a while. From Ilanz the Rhine is swimmable and that’s where I’ll get back in the water again.”

Swimming for Science

By crossing Lake Toma, generally considered the source of the Rhine, Andreas Fath has begun a very special marathon swim. Because for the chemist and long-distance swimmer, it’s not so much about the sporting challenge which the impressive length of the swim, from the Graubünden Alps to the North Sea, represents. The “Rheines Wasser” project is actually all about the water quality of the Rhine, which the researcher and his team will be testing scientifically, all along the 1,231 km of river. “I’m swimming for science,” explains the university professor. “My goal is to compile a complete

HOCHSCHULE FURTWANGEN

FURTWANGEN
Robert-Gerwig-Platz 1
78120 Furtwangen
Fon +49.7723.920-0
Fax +49.7723.920-1109

VILLINGEN-SCHWENNINGEN
Jakob-Kienzle-Straße 17
78054 Villingen-Schwenningen
Fon +49.7720.307-0
Fax +49.7720.307-3109

TUTTLINGEN
Kronenstraße 16
78532 Tuttlingen
Fon +49.7461.1502-0
Fax +49.7461.1502-6201

info@hs-furtwangen.de
www.hs-furtwangen.de

Postbank Karlsruhe
Kontonummer 22 400 754
Bankleitzahl 660 100 75
IBAN DE24 6601 0075 0022 4007 54
BIC PBNKDEFF

list of substances in the water of the Rhine, in particular those which negatively affect the water quality. On the basis of the results, the next step is to develop new solutions and systems to treat waste water, to prevent critical materials from even getting into the water. As I've already managed to do with a filter treatment for perfluorinated tensides." At the same time he hopes that the combination of extreme sport, science and environmental protection will attract a lot of public attention, making people aware of the importance of water as a resource and the need to protect it effectively. Through donations, he hopes to be able to buy a piece of large analytical equipment, of vital importance for his research work, which cannot be financed by university funding alone. "To get third-party funding for research nowadays, you have to come up with something out of the ordinary," says Andreas Fath grinning.

Initial water samples from Lake Toma

Andreas Fath and his team of students from HFU have also taken water samples from Lake Toma. These will be tested for various substances at Furtwangen University and at various scientific institutes such as the Swiss water research institute Eawag (Dübendorf), the Alfred Wegener Institute (Helgoland), the Wetsus Institute in the Netherlands (Leeuwarden), as well as by analysis technology companies. The research team tested levels of oxygen, ammonium, nitrates and phosphates in the water right away by means of rapid tests. "It will get really interesting when we have more comparison values and with those results we can see where and how the water of the Rhine changes between the source and the estuary," explained Professor Fath.

Follow the Project live and online

Those who are interested can follow the progress of the project online over the project website www.en.rheines-wasser.eu and on the project Facebook page www.facebook.com/RheinesWasser. "We hope people will be interested and will support us by following our project live along the Rhine. And of course we'll be happy to meet them at the stops along the way," says

Andreas Fath. But he warns anyone thinking of doing the same thing, “The Rhine has a very powerful current which makes it extremely dangerous, even for experienced swimmers like me. Please do not try to swim with me. It’s much better for me if you just cheer me on from the riverbank.”

Press contact

Jutta Neumann
Furtwangen University
Press Relations Officer
Phone +49.7723.920-2734

jutta.neumann@hs-furtwangen.de

Dr. Carsten Tessmer
KommunikationsKonsortium
Phone +49.40.28006583
Mobile +49.160.99136380

ct@kommunikationskonsortium.com

“Rheines Wasser” – Project partners



