

ФІЗИЧНА ГЕОГРАФІЯ

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MODELLING THE WATER REGIME OF THE SERET RIVER UNDER CLIMATE CHANGE CONDITIONS

The paper proposes an algorithmic model for hydroecological research of the Seret River; considers the main hydrometric characteristics of the river; analyses climatic changes that affect the components of the water balance of the territory. An important aspect of the work is the collection and processing of the results of monitoring observations from the largest hydrological station in Chortkiv for 2015-2023. Graphical modelling and mathematical calculations have proven that the Seret River is becoming shallower, which in turn has led to a decrease in the self-cleaning potential of the watercourse. At the same time, heavy rainfall causes dangerous floods. The main regulatory and legal acts in force in the field of water use, protection and restoration of water resources are analysed. Management measures to reduce the negative impact of climate change in the Seret River basin are justified.

Keywords: hydrometric characteristics of rivers, droughts, floods, graphic models, water resource management, regulatory and legal acts.



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МОДЕЛЮВАННЯ ВОДНОГО РЕЖИМУ РІЧКИ СЕРЕТ В УМОВАХ КЛІМАТИЧНИХ ЗМІН

В останні десятиліття все більше уваги приділяється вивченню малих і середніх річок. Це пов'язано не тільки з необхідністю реалізації комплексних екологічних стратегій використання водних ресурсів, але й з усвідомленням важливості водних об'єктів для функціонування навколишнього середовища та життєдіяльності людини. Метою даного дослідження є виявлення основних закономірностей зміни водного режиму річки Серет і обґрунтування управлінських заходів для пом'якшення наслідків кліматичних змін у басейні річки.

У роботі запропонована алгоритмічна модель гідроекологічного дослідження р. Серет; розглянуто основні гідрометричні характеристики річки; аналізуються кліматичні зміни, що впливають на складові водного балансу території. Важливим аспектом роботи є збір та опрацювання результатів моніторингових спостережень з найбільшого гідрологічного поста у м. Чортків за 2015-2023 рр.

Встановлено, що кліматичні зміни призвели до підвищення середньорічної температури повітря, що особливо помітного в зимові та літні місяці. На тлі підвищення температури повітря у долині річки Серет спостерігається нерівномірний розподіл опадів. Це призводить до інтенсифікації посушливих явищ, а в теплий період характерними стають зливові та локальні опади, які провокують небезпечні наводки. Методами графічного моделювання та математичних розрахунків було доведено, що відбувається обміління річки Серет, оскільки середній показник рівня води в річці упродовж досліджуваного проміжку часу був нижчий за середній багаторічний (390 см). Особливо низький рівень води у р. Сереті спостерігався у 2016 та 2017 роках (352 - 353 см), тобто відповідно на 37-38 см менший від норми. Це у свою чергу спричинило зниження потенціалу самоочищення водотоку та в перспективі може суттєво вплинути на гідробіотів на водну екосистему в цілому. Разом з тим, зливові опади провокують небезпечні наводки. Максимальний рівень води за досліджуваний період відмічений 28.02.2017 р. – 445 см – під час весняної повені. Літні наводки (420-423 см) спостерігалися також у 2019 та 2020 роках та весняні повені (424-425 см) у 2022-2023 роках.

Як доводять дослідження, зміна клімату створює додаткові ризики утворення довготривалих посух, які перериваються зливами значної інтенсивності, що призводить до небезпеки затоплень, підтоплень. Антропогенні фактори посилюють негативні впливи кліматичних змін на водні об'єкти, серед них розорення чи забудова прибережних захисних смуг, засмічення водотоків тощо.

До основних нормативно-правових актів, що діють у сфері використання і охорони вод та відтворення водних ресурсів, належать, зокрема, Водний кодекс України, Кодекс України про надра, Закони України «Про охорону навколишнього природного середовища», «Про питну воду, питне водопостачання та водовідведення», «Про Основні засади (стратегію) державної екологічної політики України на період до 2030 року», «Про забезпечення санітарного та епідемічного благополуччя населення», Указ Президента України від 30 вересня 2019 р. № 722 «Про Цілі сталого розвитку України на період до 2030 року», розпорядження КМУ від 09.12.2022. «Про схвалення Водної стратегії України на період до 2050 року». Україна з 2024 року розпочала реалізацію планів управління річковими басейнами відповідно до Угоди про асоціацію між Україною та Європейським Союзом.

Щоб пом'якшити негативний вплив кліматичних змін в басейні річки Серет, доцільно оптимізувати структуру землекористування, зокрема скоротити частку орних земель, забезпечити збереження води у природних ландшафтах шляхом відновлення найбільш цінних природних комплексів, таких як ліси та водно-болотні угіддя. Також важливо створювати природоохоронні території, включаючи об'єкти природно-заповідного фонду та Смарагдової мережі. Необхідно забезпечити відновлення і відповідне облаштування водоохоронних зон шляхом залуження чи заліснення. Важливим кроком є впровадження заходів із запобігання ерозійно-гідрологічним процесам. Окрім цього, потрібно покращити контроль за спеціальним водокористуванням, переглянути еколого-економічні підходи до

Relevance of the study. Recently, more and more attention has been paid to the study of small and medium-sized rivers. This is due not only to the need to implement comprehensive environmental strategies for water resource use, but also to the recognition of the importance of water bodies for the functioning of the environment and human life. Rivers are an important source of fresh water for humanity. Today, the protection of rivers around the world has become a serious problem that requires urgent action. Increasing pollution of waterways can have irreversible consequences and lead to environmental disasters. Studies of minimum flow are important for assessing water exchange in the context of contemporary regional climate change and for characterizing the self-purification capacity of watercourses.

Analysis of publications on the research topic. The impact of climate change on Ukraine's water resources was analyzed in the works of S. Snizhko, O. Shevchenko, and Y. Didovets (2020, 2021) [21, 29, 31]; the impact of modern climate change on water resources and agricultural production was described by M. Romashchenko [et al.] (2020) [20]; N. Loboda and M. Kozlov (2020) assessed Ukraine's river water resources using average statistical models of climate change trajectories [10]; L. Potravka and V. Pichura (2020) studied the anthropogenic and climatic determinants of changes in the flow of the Dnieper River [17, 30].

The small river basin systems of the Ternopil region were studied by L. Tsaryk, I. Kovalchuk, P. Tsaryk, B. Zhdanuk, and I. Kuzyk (2020, 2021) [32]. In their works, they analyzed the state of these systems, identified trends in changes, and outlined prospects for natural resource management and optimization of nature conservation measures. The analysis of the flood regime of the Dniester River within Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil regions was carried out by I. Barna and O. Sofinska (2022) [3]. The issue of regulating economic activity on ponds and reservoirs in the Nichlava River basin is covered in the work of Yu. Melnyk, L. Tsaryk, and I. Kuzyk (2022) [12]. Geoecological studies of the Seret River were conducted by N. Stetsko (2018) [22]. The issues of natural resource management and nature conservation in the Kachava River basin were studied by L. Yankovska and S. Novytska (2022) [35]. Transformational processes of a geoecological nature in the Dzhuryin River basin were studied by O. Bakalo, L. Tsaryk, and P. Tsaryk in their works (2018, 2020) [2]. A geoecological assessment of land use patterns within the small basin of the Gnizdechnaya River was conducted by I. Kuzyk, I. Vitenko, and V.

Tsaryk (2022) [9]. The rivers located within the Husiatyn territorial community are described in the publication by A. Lyubiy, L. Yankovska, and S. Novytska (2023) [11]. Particular attention is paid to the use of a basin approach to form an effective system of nature management and conservation. This topic has been the subject of expeditionary research and is reflected in a collective monograph prepared by L. Tsaryk, P. Tsaryk, I. Kuzyk, and V. Tsaryk [28]. P. Tsaryk studied the features of the nature reserve fund of the small rivers Gnizna, Dzhuryin, and Nichlava, creating a series of maps showing the distribution of river basins and nature reserve fund territories and objects [25, 26, 33]. The hydroecological and hydrochemical characteristics of river basin systems (tributaries of the Dniester) in Ternopil region under conditions of technogenic load were studied by T. Kapusta (2024) [5].

The problems of small rivers in Western Podillia have long attracted the attention of Professor I. Kovalchuk and his scientific followers and students: E. Ivanov, A. Mikhnovich, O. Pylypovich, Y. Andreichuk, O. Shvets, B. Zhdanuk, T. Pavlovskaya, and D. Shevchuk [1, 6, 7, 8, 14].

However, research into the impact of climate change on river flow in Ternopil region has only just begun. **The purpose of this study** is to identify the main patterns of change in the water regime of the Seret River and to justify management measures to reduce the effects of climate change in the river basin.

Materials and methods. The theoretical and methodological basis of the study is the fundamental principles of geoecology, ecological and constructive geography, geographical regional studies, and hydrology. The study is based on a geoecological approach, which involves a comprehensive analysis of the hydroecological state of the Seret River. The collected materials were processed using the following methods: geoecological analysis, descriptive, comparative, mathematical, statistical, analysis of interrelationships and interdependencies, and graphical modeling.

Results and discussion. The main areas of river research are analyzing their condition and dynamics, and identifying the factors that cause changes in dynamic equilibrium.

Research on the hydrological and ecological characteristics of the Seret River in Ternopil region using the following algorithmic model:

- defining the purpose and main objectives of the research;
- analysis of information sources (literature,

cartography, etc.);

- description of natural conditions within the river basin;

- collection and processing of statistical data, results of monitoring observations (from the largest hydrological station in Chortkiv);

- analysis of the hydrological characteristics of the Seret River and their dynamics over the last 10 years;

- identification of the main sources of river pollution and assessment of its ecological status;

- justification of ways to improve the hydroecological status of the Seret River.

The Seret River is a left tributary of the Dniester River. It is one of the longest rivers in Ternopil region. The object under study belongs to the category of medium-sized rivers. The length of the watercourse reaches 248 km. The Seret River originates from springs located in the village of Nyshe (Ternopil district) and is formed as a result of several small rivers – the Right Seret, Left Seret, Vyatyna, and Hrabarka. The upper reaches of the river cross the Voronyaky Hills, the middle

reaches flow along Ternopil Plateau, and the lower reaches are located within the Dniester Canyon. The main direction of the flow is from north to south (partly to the southeast) [22].

The water intake area covers 3,900 km², with a total elevation difference of 230 m and an average slope of 0.93%. The riverbed in the upper reaches is moderately winding, and below Ternopil it is very winding. The width of the riverbed at the headwaters reaches 4–10 m, and downstream it ranges from 10–20 to 35–50 m and more. The valley in the upper reaches is wide and symmetrical, below the city of Terebovlia it changes to a canyon-like (in some areas the width is 0.5–0.8 km). The floodplain below the source is bilateral and swampy, becoming intermittent in the middle and lower reaches, with a width of mainly 0.1–0.2 km. The river's slope is small – 0.93 m/km. As a result, the water flow velocity is also insignificant – 0.3–0.5 m/s, reaching up to 2 m/s on the rapids. The river depth on the rapids is shallow – 0.2–0.7 m, reaching 1.5–3 m on the pools [22].

Table 1

Main hydrometric characteristics of the Seret River [27]

River name	Length, km	Total drop, m	Average slope, %	River network density of the basin, km ² /km	Basin area, km ²
The Seret River	242	230	0,9	0,44	3900

The Seret has a mixed water supply, but rain and snow are the main sources. Throughout the year, the water temperature in the Seret River is pretty high, especially in winter (+2...+3°C), which is because of the warmer underground waters that feed the river. Ice cover usually lasts from late December to early March, after which the spring flood begins, lasting an average of one month. However, the ice regime is unstable: the river freezes only in cold winters, and in the upper reaches there is often no ice cover at all, which is again due to the nature of the groundwater. Only in very harsh winters does the upper reaches of the river become covered with ice [27].

During floods, the water can rise by 0.7–2.0 m, and during high floods, the height can reach more than 3.5 m. In addition, spring also sees the highest water consumption, which varies along the length of the river from 54 m³/s (Gorodishche village) to 313 m³/s (Chortkiv city). The minimum water levels in the Seret River are observed, of course, during the summer low water period, but in some years, rainy floods can cause water levels and consumption to reach their maximum for the year.

The study of the main hydrological and hydrodynamic characteristics of the Seret River was conducted based on data from the largest hydrological station in Chortkiv for 2015–2023.

Over the last decade, the Seret River has been getting shallower. The average annual water level in the river during the study period is lower than the long-term average (calculated for 1940, 1945–2023), which is 390 cm (Fig. 1).

A particularly low water level in the Seret River was observed in 2016. The lowest level in the last 10 years was recorded in the same year (September 17, 2016) and amounted to 353 cm, and in the following year, 2017 (August 21, 2017), it was 352 cm, which is 37–38 cm below normal. This water level was more than twice lower than the absolute maximum (724 cm) recorded on April 2, 1969, but slightly higher than the absolute minimum (323 cm) observed on July 2, 1959, and July 19, 1960. In other years, the lowest mark did not fall below 360 cm, with low water levels recorded mainly in June (2015, 2018) and September (2019, 2020). Meanwhile, 2021 and 2023 were wet years, and the minimum level did not fall below 371 and 370 cm, respectively, during the summer months.

The maximum water level during the study period was recorded on February 28, 2017, at 445 cm during the spring flood. This is 55 cm above the long-term average, but 1.6 times less than the absolute maximum in 1969. Summer floods – 420–423 cm – were observed in 2019 and 2020, and

spring floods – 424-425 cm – in 2022-2023. During low-water years (2015-2016), all average monthly

water levels were below normal.

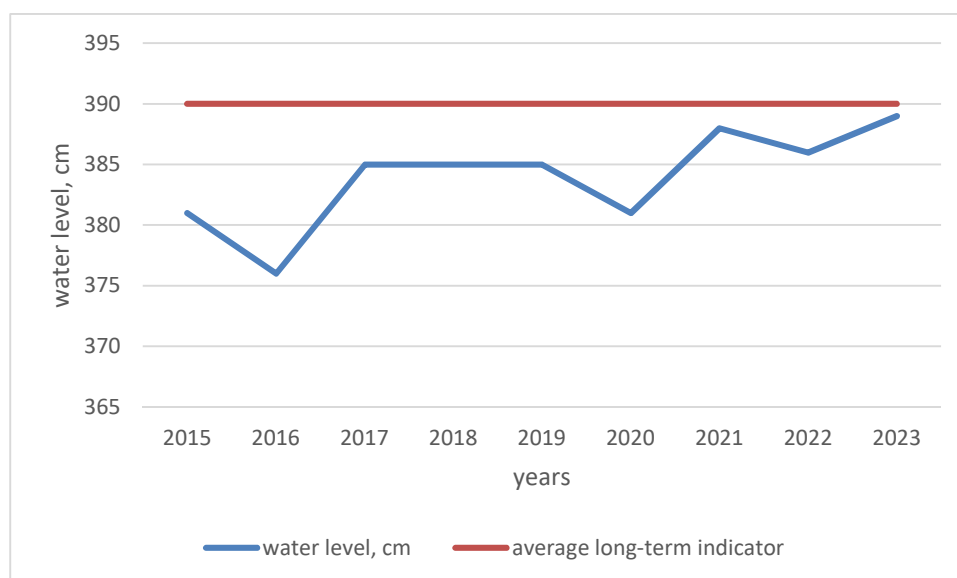


Fig. 1. Dynamics of average annual water levels in the Seret River (according to data from the hydrological station in Chortkiv, 2015–2023) [author's figure]

Analysis of data from the Chortkiv hydrological station shows that low-water years are gradually being replaced by high-water years. For the period from 2015 to 2023 the lowest water levels were recorded in 2015-2017, while starting in 2021, the water situation is normalizing, and in

2023, the average annual water level in the Seret River (389 cm) was close to normal (390 cm).

At first glance, it is difficult to find a clear correlation between precipitation intensity and river water levels when analyzing average annual indicators (Fig. 2).

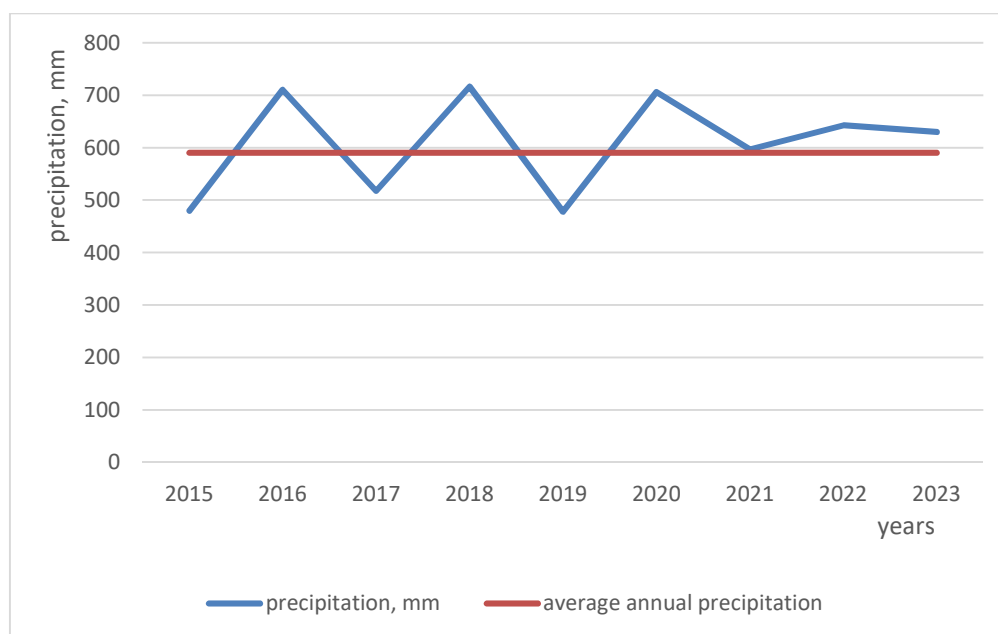


Fig. 2. Average annual precipitation (Chortkiv, 2015–2023) [author's figure]

We considered one of the driest (2016) and one of the wettest (2023) years of the last decade and analyzed data for June, since this month in 2016 had the lowest water level compared to June of other years in the study period, and in 2023, the water content of the Seret River was close to the long-term average.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that in June 2016, there was a significant amount of precipitation (108.2 mm) – almost 1/5 of the annual norm.

Why was the water level in the river so low? It is also noteworthy that in June 2023, almost the same amount of precipitation (120.9 mm) fell – the

highest compared to other months of the year, but unlike in 2016, the water level in the river was normal.

The graphs show that the first ten days of June

2016 were characterized by drought, which immediately affected the water level in the Seret River, which fell from 372 to 366 cm between June 1 and June 11, i.e., by 6 cm (Fig. 3).

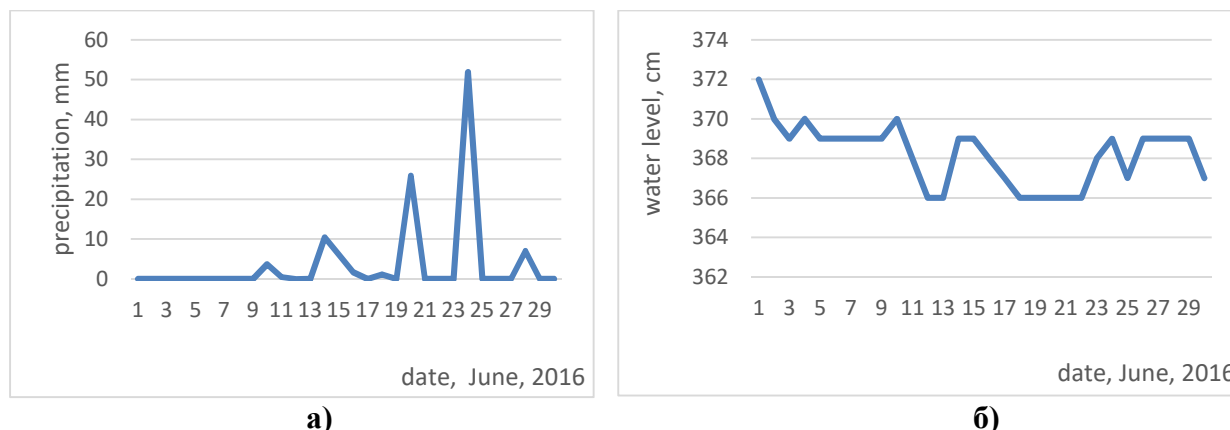


Fig. 3. a) Precipitation distribution in June 2016; b) Water level in June 2016 (at the Chortkiv hydrological station) [author's figure]

Even small precipitation (6-10 mm), observed over three days in the middle of the month over a significant area of the catchment, allowed the water level to rise by 3 cm (to 369 cm). However, in the following days, the water level dropped again to

366 cm, largely due to high average daily air temperatures (22.4-26.5 °C), which contributed to intense evaporation from the surface of the watercourse (Fig. 4).

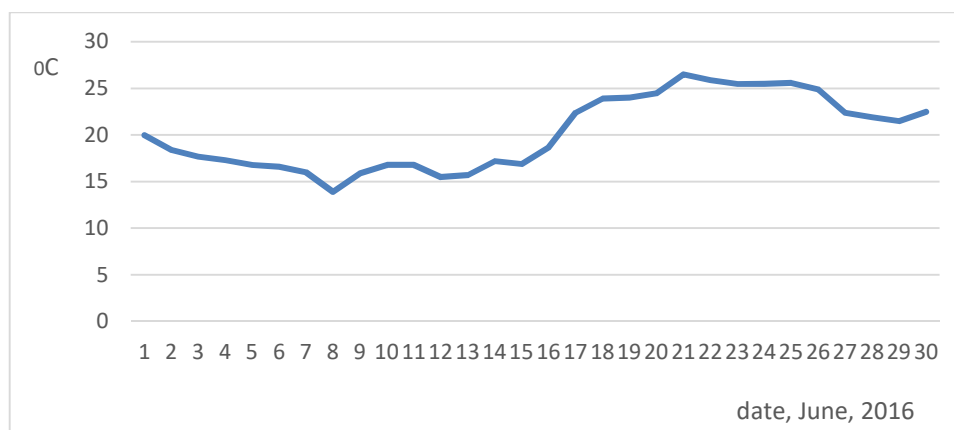


Fig. 4. Dynamics of average daily air temperature in June 2016 (according to data from the hydrological station in Chortkiv) [author's figure]

Although precipitation on June 20, 2016, was quite intense (25.9 mm), it fell locally and therefore did not significantly affect the river's water content. Intense precipitation (51.9 mm) that fell in a single day – June 24, 2016 – helped raise the water level in the river by 3 cm and maintain it at that level for 5 days, but due to high temperatures and lack of precipitation until the end of the month, the water level dropped to the usual 367 cm.

Thus, there was almost no precipitation during June 2016. Heavy rainfall of 25.9 and 51.9 mm (72% of the total monthly precipitation) fell in two days and was local in nature, and therefore could not significantly and permanently raise the water level in the Seret River, especially in conditions of high average daily temperatures reaching 26.50°C

and high evaporation from the surface of the reservoir.

In the first ten days of June 2023, a similar situation was observed – a lack of precipitation, which led to a decrease in the water level in the Seret River from 383 to 375 cm, i.e., by 8 cm. However, on June 11, 2023, 54.3 mm of precipitation fell, which immediately filled the river to a level of 385 cm. In the following days, precipitation of varying intensity (from 0.1 to 15 mm) recurred almost daily and covered a significant part of the catchment area, which allowed the watercourse to flood to the long-term average (390 cm) by the end of the month and even slightly exceed it (Fig. 5).

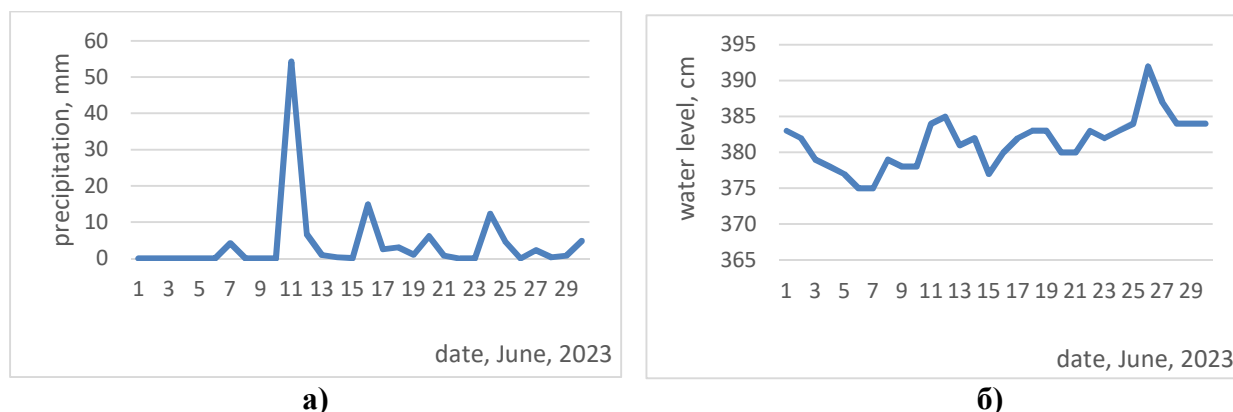


Fig. 5. Precipitation distribution in June 2023 b) Water level in June 2023
(according to data from the hydrological station in Chortkiv) [author's figure]

Air temperature indicators logically correlated with water level indicators during this period, demonstrating an inverse correlation and some-

what modeling the curvature of the water level graph, but in conditions of frequent precipitation, they did not change it fundamentally (Fig. 6).

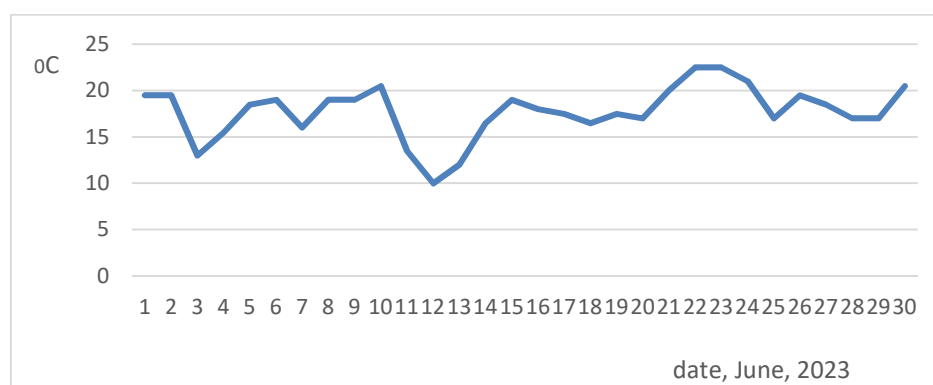


Fig. 6. Dynamics of average daily air temperature in June 2023 (according to data from the hydrological station in Chortkiv) [author's figure]

Therefore, river water content depends not only on the amount of precipitation, but also on its frequency and the catchment area it covers.

As for the frequency of precipitation, no clear pattern could be traced by month or year.

The only thing that can be stated is that, on average, 126 days a year (almost a third) are characterized by precipitation of varying intensity (Fig. 7). We were interested in whether climate change had affected the Seret River's ability to self-purify, i.e., the intensity with which wastewater neutralization, sedimentation of solid pollutants, and chemical, biological, and other natural processes could occur. This process is significantly influenced by the biotic diversity of the water body, temperature regime, water color, flow velocity, flow rate and depth of the water body, regulation of river channels, water turbidity, dilution of harmful substances, and other factors.

The surface water stability potential coefficient was determined using the method developed by V.A. Baranovsky.

The data obtained were compared with the stability potential coefficient of the Seret River

(according to data from the hydrological station in Chortkiv) in 2003, calculated by L.V. Yankovska [28], which was 0.64.

Thus, during the period under review from 2015 to 2023 (except for 2022), the self-purification potential of the Seret River was lower than 20 years ago. The rate of self-purification is directly correlated with the water content of the river and the speed of water flow. Due to climate change, the river's water flow has decreased significantly. While in 2003 the average long-term water flow was 13.1 m³/s, in 2023 it was 12.4 m³/s. In some years, the water flow decreased to almost 6.3 m³/s (2016, 2019-2021, 2023), and was slightly better for self-purification of the reservoir in 2022 – 9.17 m³/s.

However, it has been proven that self-purification processes directly depend on water temperature, which is why they occur more intensively during the warm season. Over the past 20 years, the number of days per year with an average daily water temperature above 16 °C has increased slightly. While before 2003 the minimum number of days could reach 98, between 2015 and

2023 there were at least 110 days with temperatures favorable for self-purification (in 2021), and the maximum was 136-139 days (in 2018, 2022, and 2023). The average long-term frequency of days with an average daily water temperature above 16 °C during the study period increased to 126 days, which is 6-8 days more than 20 years ago. Water temperature determines the rate of mineralization of natural and anthropogenic impurities. Experimental studies have shown that when the water temperature drops below 16 °C, the self-purification process slows down (the most optimal

indicators are 20-25 °C). The temperature profile determines the degree of oxygen saturation of water, the intensity of vertical turbulence, and, consequently, the transfer of biogenic elements from bottom areas and the amount of primary production, which is decisive in the self-purification process of a reservoir, since, as a rule, aquatic organisms make the main contribution to this process: the biochemical transformation of substances occurs in the processes of production and destruction as a result of the inclusion of pollutants in food chains.

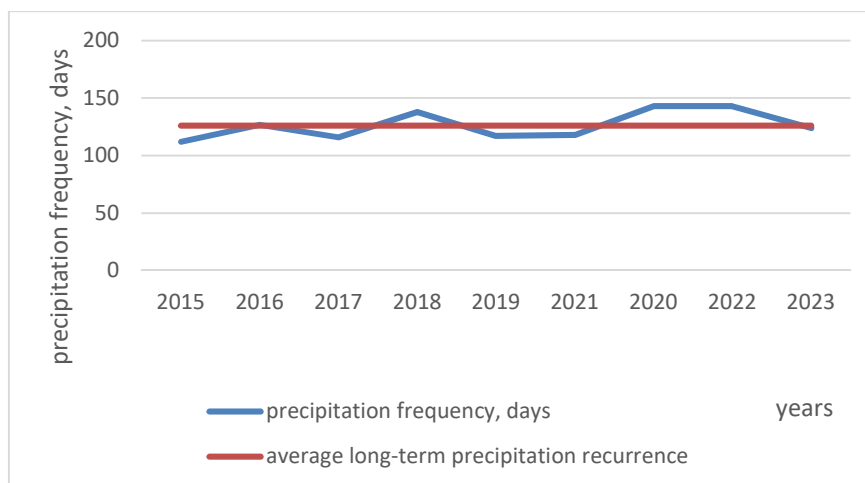


Fig. 7. Dynamics of precipitation recurrence in 2015–2023 (Chortkiv) [author's figure]

For effective water resource management, it is important to take into account the links between water resources, climate change, energy and agriculture in a comprehensive and integrated manner in practical policy, as these areas are closely interrelated.

The main regulatory and legal acts governing the use and protection of water and the restoration of water resources include, in particular the Water Code of Ukraine [4], the Code of Ukraine on Subsurface Resources, the Laws of Ukraine «On Environmental Protection», «On Drinking Water, Drinking Water Supply and Water Disposal», «On the Basic Principles (Strategy) of the State Environmental Policy of Ukraine for the Period until 2030», «On Ensuring Sanitary and Epidemic Well-being of the Population», Decree of the President of Ukraine № 722 of 30 September 2019 «On Sustainable Development Goals of Ukraine for the Period until 2030», Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 09.12.2022. «On the approval of the Water Strategy of Ukraine for the period up to 2050» [19]. In 2024, Ukraine began implementing river basin management plans in accordance with the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union [15].

Climate change creates additional risks of prolonged droughts, interrupted by heavy rainfall,

leading to the danger of flooding and inundation. Anthropogenic factors exacerbate the negative effects of climate change on water bodies, including the destruction or development of coastal protection strips and the clogging of watercourses with large mechanical pollutants, which leads to an increase in the negative impact of floods and inundations.

To reduce the negative impact of climate change in the Seret River basin, it is necessary to:

- optimise land use by reducing the proportion of arable land (ploughland),
- ensure water conservation in natural landscapes by restoring the most valuable natural and minimally disturbed natural complexes, in particular forests and wetlands; create nature reserve areas and territories within river basins, such as the Emerald Network;
- restore and properly equip water protection zones, including through their grassing and/or afforestation;
- introduce a system of measures to prevent the development of erosion and hydrological processes;
- improve the efficiency of control and accounting for special water use, preventing technical water losses;
- review the environmental and economic

characteristics of hydropower development, including aspects of flood protection;

- focus on educating communities and farmers on water conservation and climate change adaptation methods.

- develop action plans for droughts, covering water supply measures, water consumption restrictions and fire prevention, which may intensify in drought conditions;

- implement measures to mitigate the negative effects of climate change by improving water use efficiency through water reuse and sustainable water use practices.

Conclusions. Climate change has caused an increase in annual air temperature, mainly due to winter and summer months. Against the backdrop of rising air temperatures in the Seret River basin, there is a noticeable uneven distribution of precipitation, which intensifies drought conditions, while during the warm season there are torrential and localized rains that cause high (dangerous) floods.

Over the last decade, the Seret River has been getting shallower, as the average annual water level in the river during the study period is lower than the long-term average of 390 cm. Particularly low water levels in the Seret River were observed in 2016 and 2017 (352-353 cm), which is 37-38 cm below normal. The maximum water level during the study period was recorded on February 28, 2017, at 445 cm during the spring flood. Summer

floods (420-423 cm) were also observed in 2019 and 2020, and spring floods (424-425 cm) in 2022-2023.

During the period under review from 2015 to 2023 (except for 2022), the self-cleaning potential of the Seret River was lower than 20 years ago (in 2003), as climate change has significantly reduced the river's water flow. While in 2003 the average long-term water flow was 13.1 m³/s, in 2023 it was 12.4 m³/s.

To reduce the negative impact of climate change in the Seret River basin, it is necessary to optimise land use, in particular to reduce the proportion of arable land, ensure water conservation in natural landscapes by restoring the most valuable natural complexes, such as forests and wetlands, create nature conservation areas, including nature reserve fund sites and the Emerald Network, and ensure the restoration and appropriate development of water protection zones through grassing or afforestation. In addition, it is necessary to improve control over special water use and review ecological and economic approaches to hydropower development, taking into account flood protection aspects. Attention should be paid to educating the community and farmers on water conservation and climate change adaptation methods. It is necessary to introduce methods for the rational use of water resources through water reuse and sustainable water use practices.

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