



Emek Hefer

Background

The Emek Hefer Regional Council extends over 140,000 dunams, from the coastline in the west to the Shomron Mountains in the east. The Council is comprised of 44 small communities (moshavim, kibbutzim and villages), with a total population of 35,000 people. 90% of Emek Hefer's land is presently in use. The Council is only 16 km wide and national infrastructure lines including major roads, train tracks, water ways, gas, sewage and electric lines pass through the district.

The rehabilitated Alexander Stream flows through the center of the Council creating a scenic tributary that attracts visitors and animals. However, current pollution sources on both sides of the Green Line still threaten the stream's waters and the ecological system that it supports.

Tour Path and Sites:

The Emek Hefer Neighborhood Path provides a glimpse into the community's local water sources and its efforts to deal with waste management and sewage. In addition, the tour highlights the mutual dependency of the area's transboundary water sources.

The path brings us to several "green" initiatives, as well as areas of unresolved conflicts, and seeks to underline the connection between a healthy environment and neighborly relations.

The tour focuses on eastern Emek Hefer, starting with an overlook near the Green Line and passing through two different kinds of wastewater treatment facilities; one conventional, the other a "constructed wetland." From there the tour takes us to the "Emek Hefer Ecological Center," where we will learn about treatment projects for water, agricultural sludge and cattle mire that turn these waste products into useful materials. The tour ends at an open green area that used to be a swamp, but today, is a protected natural and scenic area.

Most of the sites along the path are closed to visitors and require prior arrangements.

This trail is one of 17 paths or trails that deal with the issue of water and peace building between Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian communities that share a common water source. The routes were planned during 2007 in the framework of the "Good Water Neighbors" project in cooperation with community representatives as well as the municipalities

The goals of the trails are to:

- Raise public awareness of shared water and environment concerns of the communities
- Promote cross border cooperation for solving environmental problems
- Develop the potential for local eco-tourism

The "Good Water Neighbors" project was established in 2001 by "EcoPeace / Friends of the Earth Middle East" in order to promote local cooperation efforts to protect the shared water and environment between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority.

"EcoPeace / Friends of the Earth Middle East" is a regional environmental organization that works out of 3 offices, Tel Aviv, Amman and Bethlehem to promote cooperative efforts to protect our shared environmental heritage.

- For more information, please visit our website: **www.foeme.org**
- Nahalat Binyamin 85, Tel Aviv 66102, Israel
Tel **+972-3-5605383** Fax **+972-3-5604693**
info@foeme.org
- Specific information on the neighbors trails: **<http://www.foeme.org/publications>**

Guided tours on the Neighbors Trails take place once every three weeks. To sign up, please write to: info@foeme.org



Friends of the Earth Middle East



Neighbors Path



THE RICHARD & RHODA GOLDMAN FUND

"from the American people"

The Path's Stations

1

Yad Hannah Wastewater Treatment Plant

From here it is possible to look out onto Bat Hefer, the youngest community in the valley (11 years) adjacent to Road 6, a view of the Shomron Mountains, the neighboring Palestinian city of Tulkarem and the Separation Barrier.

Beyond the Green Line, over 250,000 residents live on the slopes of the Shomron Mountains in the area of the Alexander Stream's basin. The Nablus Stream (Wadi Zomer in Arabic) is the Alexander Stream's main tributary, originating between the Grizim and Eival mountains. The Nablus Stream drains the Western Shomron area, crosses the Green Line into Emek Hefer, near the city of Tulkarem, Kibbutz Yad Hannah and Bat Hefer, and continues its flow into the Alexander Stream.

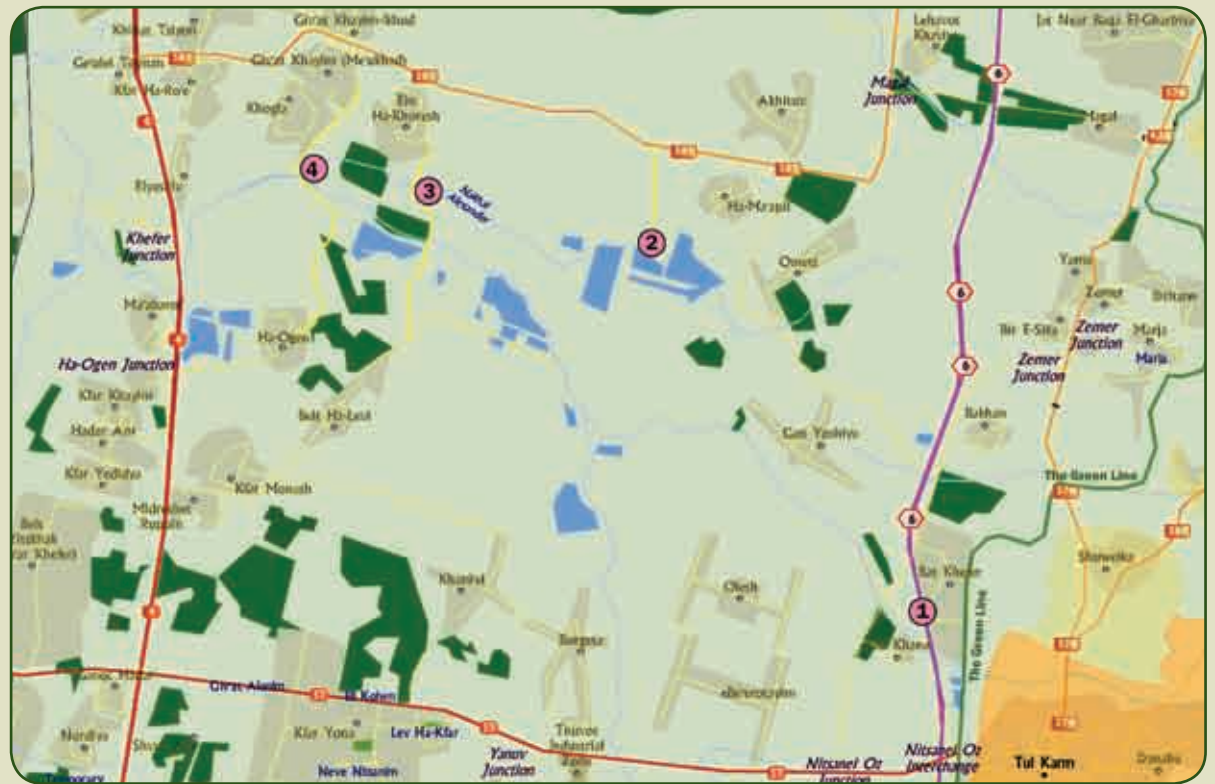
The Tulkarem area, once well known for its rich agriculture and comfortable natural conditions, suffers today from acute environmental problems. This is mainly due to partially treated wastewater, together with waste from olive mills (seasonal) and stone dust from nearby quarries that are all dumped directly into the Nablus Stream. This situation not only creates an immediate health risk, but seriously damages the ecosystem of the stream and pollutes the ground water - the only source of drinking water for West Bank inhabitants!

Water Purification Facilities

The Yad Hannah Purification Institute was established in 2000 to treat sewage from Tulkarem and waste that flows in the Nablus Stream, entering Emek Hefer. After partial purification, the treated wastewater is dumped back into the stream (during the summer months when natural water flow is low), while in the winter it is pumped into Emek Hefer's reservoirs (to be used for irrigation). The facility was developed as an emergency solution and its purification capacity does not meet the standards needed to thoroughly rehabilitate the stream.

As an act of support for the ongoing cooperation between the Head of Emek Hefer's City Council and the Mayor of Tulkarem, the German government funded the rehabilitation of three sewage treatment pools in Tulkarem. Although this initiative only partially meets Tulkarem's sewage needs, it is hoped that future cooperation will lead to a comprehensive solution.

In the spring of 2007, three experimental constructed wetlands were built in Yad Hannah to improve the quality of the treated wastewater that leaves the purification facility. "Constructed Wetlands" is a method for water purification that utilizes a natural filtration processes, aerobic and anaerobic, using plants, pebbles, soil and sun. In the future, the purification facility will be upgraded with an emphasis on constructed wetlands.



2

The Emek Hefer Ecological Center: Agricultural Sludge Treatment Center and Reservoir

Everyday the Agricultural Sludge Treatment Center treats 750 tons of cattle mire derived from 150 dairy barns in the area. The Center creates 13.5 cubic meters of biogas a day, providing 1.9 megawatts of electricity a year. This is the largest plant in the Middle East and the first of its kind in Israel.

The northern reservoir is one of 8 water reservoirs established in Emek Hefer to provide affordable treated waste water for agriculture. This enterprise supplies 20 million cubic meters of water for agricultural purposes and is one of the largest in Israel.

3

Einot Hogla (Partridge Springs)

In the beginning of the 19th century this entire area was covered by swamps. Over the years, many were drained; however, a few springs of potable water still exist in the area today. Einot Hogla, "the Partridge Spring" is one such area, combining shallow and deep pools, streams and an abundance of green flora. Water fowl and migratory birds find refuge here, as do unique animals and plants.

We will stroll between the water ponds and the foliage, observe and listen to the birds and enjoy a view of the hills to the west, the valley and the surrounding farmlands. (It is highly recommended to bring binoculars!).

4

"The Love Tree"

"The Love Tree" is a nickname for a large Eucalyptus tree found along the bank of the Alexander Stream. This particular spot, with its benches, shade and flowing stream, is located in one of the rehabilitated sections of the stream. This lovely area illustrates the potential beauty and enjoyment that nature can provide.

An abundance of rural and agricultural tourist attractions, as well as galleries and restaurants, await you all throughout Emek Hefer. Local residents will be happy to host you!

