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**9th SPRING Competition Report**

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The 9th SPRING competition funding (£500) kindly awarded by water@leeds contributed to the cost of my attendance at the 11th Symposium for European Freshwater Sciences from the 1st – 5th July, in Zagreb, Croatia. The award was spent on conference registration fees (£287.00), with the remainder put towards return flights (£285.00). This funding enabled me to give an oral presentation on Thursday 4th July in special session SS3, which was entitled ‘hydrology, biogeochemistry and ecology of mountain freshwaters’. My presentation was titled ‘decreasing glacier cover drives predictable successional changes in the structure and allometry of river food webs’ and detailed the findings of one data chapter from my PhD thesis. The attached images show the conference program and me delivering my presentation. The session was well attended by a highly specialised audience and enabled me to have discussions with and obtain feedback from other PhD students, postdoctoral researchers and academic staff. The conference as a whole was attended by 500 participants representing 42 countries. I was also able to use this time to hold a meeting with three collaborators, to discuss how to adapt a further PhD chapter into a format suitable for journal manuscript submission. This led to discussions with additional academics who provided further advice and access to unpublished materials for reference. My attendance at this conference would not have been possible without SPRING funding and the water@leeds logo was included in the title and acknowledgement slides of my presentation.

Attendance at this conference enabled me to develop my oral presentation skills and practice summarising the information from my PhD data chapters in a concise manner, suitable for other freshwater scientists. As many attendees from other related research projects were present, it also enhanced my understanding of current collaborations and funding structures within this field. The most rewarding component of this trip was receiving positive feedback from a number of attendees. My presentation generated a number of interesting follow up questions and the subsequent discussions provided me with the opportunity to meet experts working within river ecology, many of which for the first time. I could highly recommend the Symposium for European Freshwater Sciences to other students interested in the biodiversity, structure and functioning of running waters and lakes. A highlight was the diversity of presentations provided, as this conference was attended by 500 participants from 42 countries. It hosted highly focused sessions relevant to my academic specialism but the diversity of the special themes ensured that I was also exposed to theory and methods used in other related areas of freshwater science, helping to generate interdisciplinary ideas to strengthen my work. Student registration fees (~ £287) are affordable in comparison to other conferences of this size and constructive feedback was provide by participants in a friendly atmosphere.

