

Solutions for our water problems, with the young professionals, and the knowledge of the past
若い専門家たちと先人の知恵で、水問題の解決へ。

Project Johannis de Rijke and the knowledge Project: Johannis de Rijke and the new watermen and women of Japan and the Netherlands (2026>)

The thematic project *Johannis de Rijke* was launched on December 6, 2023, with an opening ceremony at Zorgvlied Cemetery in Amstelveen in presence of the former Ambassador of Japan in the Netherlands, H.Minami. The main objective of the project is to engage and inspire more young people, as well as Japanese and Dutch experts and researchers, to explore and contribute to the heritage and lessons of Johannis de Rijke.





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Johannis de Rijke

Johannis de Rijke was born on December 5, 1842, in Colijnsplaat on Noord-Beveland, in the province of Zeeland, and passed away on January 20, 1913. He is buried at Zorgvlied Cemetery in Amstelveen. He can be regarded as the spiritual father of modern 19th-century water management in Japan. For more than thirty years, he worked as an engineer and later as a vice-minister in Japan. He tamed Japanese rivers through innovative hydraulic engineering works and advised the Japanese Emperor on matters of water safety. As one of the most prominent historical “water masters” and a leading figure among the group known as the “Dutch Watermen in Japan,” he continues to inspire young people and water experts worldwide. His knowledge and life story remain highly relevant in addressing current and future water challenges.

Project Johannis de Rijke

The [Project Johannis de Rijke](#) is a multi-year international knowledge and education programme initiated by Foundation Blue Line, running from 2023. The project brings renewed attention to the legacy and lessons of the Dutch hydraulic engineer Johannis de Rijke (1842–1913) and explicitly connects them to contemporary delta challenges in the Netherlands and Japan. The goal is to connect Universities in Japan and the Netherlands for the benefit of research exchange and to achieve a long-term international research program. And to produce a book about Johannis de Rijke and the new watermen and women of Japan and the Netherlands in 2027.

The knowledge project

The [Knowledge Project: New Water Masters of Japan and the Netherlands](#) is part of the long-term [Johannis de Rijke Programme \(2023>\)](#). Inspired by the legacy of Dutch engineer Johannis de Rijke, the project aims to build a **sustainable and long-term collaboration between Japan and the Netherlands** in the field of water management, landscape design, and delta innovation.



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What will happen in 2026?

The year 2026 marks the **active start of the international programme** with students of the TU Delft University with a series of concrete activities in the Netherlands and Japan:

Delft (TU Delft – education & design)

- Exchange between Dutch and Japanese students and researchers
- Kick-off of the programme with international student groups
- Interdisciplinary design studios combining **water management and landscape architecture**
- Development of design proposals for delta regions (Netherlands & Japan)

Japan (fieldwork & international exchange)

- Learning from Japanese approaches to river management, culture, and landscape
- Study trip and workshops in Japanese delta regions, such as the **Kiso River basin**
- On-site research, field visits, and collaboration with Japanese universities
- Strengthening academic and cultural exchange

Zeeland – Southwest Delta (practice & societal connection)

- **Delta Climate Center (DCC):**
 - Workshops and knowledge exchange with experts and students
 - Presentations on climate adaptation and delta innovation
- **Watersnoodmuseum (Ouwkerk, Zeeland):**
 - Public presentations and reflection sessions
 - Linking historical events (1953 flood) to future water challenges
 - Engagement with citizens, students, and professionals

These activities combine **education, research, and public engagement**, connecting theory to real-world challenges in delta regions.

[Knowledgeproject Johannis de Rijke and the new watermen and women 2026](#)

[Actual programme 2026](#)



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Approach

The programme (2026>) consists of:

- International workshops and design studios
- Field trips and study exchanges
- Joint research and PhD collaborations
- Public events, exhibitions, and knowledge sharing

Students and researchers work on real cases in both countries, focusing on **climate adaptation, water safety, and ecological design**

Long-term ambition

The project aims to:

- Promote the **understanding** of each water-problem situation from an interdisciplinary approach, with an integral design method where culture and heritage will be a part.
- Contribute to an the **structural collaboration** between Japan and the Netherlands
- Contribute to a **lasting international knowledge network**
- Connect past, present, and future water expertise
- Develop innovative solutions for delta challenges
- Educate a new generation of “**water masters**”
- Produce a **inspirationbook with Japanese and Dutch writers and artists about the story of Johannis de Rijke and the watermen, and the new watermen and women in Japan and the Netherlands**

By linking heritage, education, and innovation, Foundation Blue Line ensures that knowledge from the past is actively used to shape a **resilient water future** in the world, Japan and the Netherlands in particular.

Foundation Blue Line acts as a **connector**, bringing together universities, students, researchers, governments, and regional partners from both countries to exchange knowledge and co-create solutions for future water challenges.



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Attachment 1. Partners

- Project initiatives:
 - Tu Delft
 - Prof. dr. Fransje Hooimeijer
 - Dr. Luca Iuorio
 - Ir. Taichi Fujii
 - Foundation Blue Line
 - ir. Leo van Gelder
 - ing. Oswald Lagendijk
 - drs. Yuka Yoshida
 - drs. Karen van Burg
 - ir. Henk Jan Verhagen
 - ing. Wout de Vries
 - Prof. dr. ir. Bas Jonkman
 - Familie De Rijke:
 - Helenus (Peer) de Rijke
 - Juliette de Rijke
- Japanese partners
 - Gifu University, Japan
 - Prof. Dr. Demura
 - Nagoya City University, Japan
 - Dr. Ono
 - Martiko Mentani (Translator, guide)
 - Drs. Taichi Fujii
 - Drs. Richard de Boer (Universal Cruise Osaka)
- Universities in Japan
 - Nagoya City University, Japan
 - Gifu University, Japan
- Experts in the Netherlands involved
 - Ir. Koos Wieriks
 - Prof. Dr. Jan Stuip



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- Drs. Vincent Harmsen (pHD)
- Ria Geluk (founder Watersnoodmuseum)
- Heritage/water institutes/musea/government:
 - Zeeuws Archief/Archives
 - Director Dr. Anya Luscombe
 - Watersnoodmuseum
 - Prof. dr. Barbara Oomen
 - Comité van aanbeveling
 - Mr. ir. Jan Hendrik Dronkers
 - Delta Climate Centre
 - Prof. dr. Albert Klein Tank
 - Provincie Zeeland
 - Drs. Aline Kok
 - Mr. Erik van Bostelen
 - Ministry of Heritage Netherlands
 - Gert Jan de Boer
 - Jean-Paul Corten



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Attachment 2.

Overview of Activities and Projects

Completed Activities

- Launch of the Year of Johannis de Rijke at Zorgvlied Cemetery (Amstelveen)
- Presentation during the first anniversary event of Stichting Blauwe Lijn (January 17, 2024)
- Essay in *Zeeland* magazine: “Zeeuwse watermanager Johannis de Rijke nog altijd voorbeeldig voor Nederland” by Johan Sturm
- Essay in *The Weekly Anthropocene* by journalist Sam Matey
- TV recording by Japanese broadcaster TBS during the Hollandsche IJssel field trip and visit to Colijnsplaat
- Collection and archiving of historical documents in collaboration with the Digital Tresor and Zeeuws Archief
- Public engagement events in Noord-Beveland, including the Cultural Fair and PeeRock festival
- Lecture by Prof. Dr. Demura (Gifu University, Japan) at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences
- Translation of Demura’s scientific article
- Podcast series on Johannis de RijkeField excursion *Waterrijke Zeeland*
- Waterfuture game, with four cards of four Dutch watermen who went to Japan in 19th century, one of them is Johannis de Rijke.

Ongoing Activities

- Inventory of Dutch Japanese knowledge projects related to water challenges
- International program: “New Water Men and Women of Japan and the Netherlands (focused on the Kiso Delta and Southwestern Delta)
- Development of the Blue Dutch Japanese Helpline for academic support
- Creation of the inspiration book *Johannis de Rijke and the new Watermen and women of Japan and the Netherlands*

<https://www.stichtingblauwelijn.nl/projecten/project-johannis-de-rijke/>



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