



The International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG) is an international network of specialists having a particular interest in mire and peatland conservation. The network encompasses a wide spectrum of expertise and interests, from research scientists to consultants, government agency specialists to peatland site managers. It operates largely through e-mail and newsletters, and holds regular workshops and symposia. For more information: consult the IMCG Website: <http://www.imcg.net>

IMCG has a Main Board of currently 13 people from various parts of the world that has to take decisions between congresses. Of these 13 an elected 5 constitute the IMCG Executive Committee that handles day-to-day affairs. The Executive Committee consists of a Chairman (Jan Sliva), a Secretary General (Hans Joosten), a Treasurer (Philippe Julve), and 2 additional members (Tatiana Minaeva, Stuart Brooks).

Viktor Masing (†), Hugo Sjörs, and Richard Lindsay have been awarded honorary membership of IMCG.

Editorial

The IMCG General Assembly (July 2002, Besançon, France) is responsible for large parts of this Newsletter. You will find the minutes of the meetings, a discussion paper on the constitution, a part of the resolutions adopted, and last but not least the newly elected executive committee.

In the past months large parts of the peatland world have been burning (SE Asia, Russia), whereas other parts have been flooded (China, Central Europe). These natural "disasters" will give rise to a lot of discussion on the future and wise use of peatlands, a subject that will also be featured on the Ramsar Convention CoP 8 in Valencia (Spain) in November.

Our new Chairman Jan Sliva apologises for not being able to address you personally in this Newsletter. Urgent personal circumstances prohibited his meeting the deadline.

Our editing has been as rigorous as always and any mistakes are entirely our responsibility. Please keep sending in news and publications on mires and peatlands. Also for information or other things, contact us at the IMCG Secretariat. Address updates should be send to Jan Sliva (sliva@wzw.tum.de, Note: email changed!). In the meantime, keep an eye on the IMCG web-site: <http://www.imcg.net>

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IMCG Biennial General Assembly

Sunday 21.07.2002 Besançon, France

Present: Philippe Julve (chair), Tatiana Minaeva, Andrej Sirin, Olivia Bragg, Jaanus Paal, Taimi Paal, Alma Wolejko, Michael Trepel, Jenny Schulz, Jenny Whinam, Althea Grundling, Piet-Louis Grundling, Karen Jenderedjian, Elena Volkova, Olga Galanina, Christina Koczka, Ron Hofstetter, Elisabeth Feldmayer, Karen Thingsgaard, Asbjorn Moen, Leslaw Wolejko, Dierk Michaelis, Juris Jatnieks, Mara Pakalne, Olivier Manneville, Rozalia Erdi, Maxim Napreenko, Raimo Heikkilä, Lenka Papackova, Ulrich Graf, Andreas Grünig, Tapio Lindholm, Jenny Lonnstad, Jan Sliva, Hans Joosten, John Couwenberg (minutes).

Opening and Welcome by Philippe Julve
Presentation of Agenda as prepared by the MB:

1. chairman of General Assembly
2. minutes of General Assembly in Quebec
3. Biennial report
4. Membership and Membership fee
5. Balance sheet
6. IMCG Strategy and Action Plan
7. Election of Main Board
8. Resolutions
9. Next venues
10. Any other business

This agenda was adopted.

Chairman

Philippe Julve will chair the Gen. Ass.

Minutes Québec

Minutes of the Québec Gen. Ass. are accepted without change.

Biennial report

Hans Joosten presents the biennial report, published earlier in the IMCG Newsletter. There were no comments and the report was adopted.

Membership & Membership fee

Jan Sliva presents the developments in the IMCG membership. As of 21 May 2002, IMCG had 256 members, of which 15 supporters, in 47 countries of the world. The distribution over the continents is as follows:

Africa	20
Asia	12
Australia	6
Europe (excl. Russia)	171
Russia	15
North America	13
South America	4

The proposal to continue without membership fee is adopted. A call for donations is made.

Balance sheet

Philippe Julve presents the Balance Sheet. Total income has been 27.200,00 EUR (24.05.02), total

spending amounts to 26.800,00 EUR (Eur. Mires Book) + 93,66 EUR (bank costs). A complete report will be presented by Philippe Julve by September/October 2002.

The high banking costs are discussed. The 93,66 EUR include 6 money movements on the account. Philippe will look into the possibilities and advantages of a credit card account; such account may provide cheaper international money transfer. The Balance Sheet is adopted.

Strategy and Action Plan

Tatiana Minaeva presents the Strategy and Action Plan and explains the background. Reference is made to the IMCG Newsletter 2002/1. The question is discussed whether IMCG needs a strategy and how it should be applied. There is general consensus on the need.

Concern is expressed that the burden of the Strategy and Action Plan, developed by the current MB, is put on the shoulders of the next MB. It is pointed out that there is a large carry-over of old MB members into the new MB and that everybody has been and still is invited to join discussions on the Strategy and Action Plan, particularly also new MB members.

Mission and Vision. Some uncertainty exists about the relation between the *Mission* and *Vision*. Minaeva explains that the *Vision* expresses the ideals and dreams of IMCG and explains its place in the world and that the *Mission* explains the overall goals. The proposal to add restoration of mire ecosystems to the mission is not accepted as it would make the *Mission* statement too precise.

The phrasing of the *Mission* Statement will be changed to: "The IMCG mission is to contribute to maintaining the diversity of mires and peatlands all over the world by conserving the full range of their natural functions and biodiversity; and by ensuring their wise and sustainable use." (instead of: "The IMCG mission is to maintain...")

The *Vision* Statement is further explained. The "global conservation network" refers to various existing and future NGOs, Instruments, Individuals, etc. In short the first part of the *Vision* is not to remain alone in the field of mire conservation. *Mission* and *Vision* adopted with changes

Principles and Values. There is agreement on the (phrasing of the) principle of *Openness*; There is agreement on the (phrasing of the) principle of *Transparency*; With respect to the principle of *Democracy* clarification is asked on how the different views referred to are documented. All viewpoints may be expressed through forums like the Newsletter and the Webpage. Opinions can also be relayed to MB and EC members at any time. Minutes of all meetings are published and adequate space is given there also for minority opinions. One should

differentiate between personal viewpoints and the corporate viewpoint of IMCG. There is agreement on the (phrasing of the) principle of *Democracy*;

The remarks on *Organisational Structure* are closely related to constitutional matters and will be discussed under point 10 of the agenda.

IMCG Action Plan.

Objectives. It should be clarified there is no order in the list of priorities (cf. table of activities). *Priorities* shall be replaced by *Objectives*. The proposal is accepted to either name these Objective a, b, c respectively or to use descriptors (Objective of identifying the global diversity..., Objective of reducing ..., Objective of elaborating...). The third Priority shall be rephrased to read "To explore..." instead of "To elaborate".

Phrasing (Our Objectives, Our Means) accepted with small changes.

[in these minutes the original phrasing of Priority 1, 2, and 3 will be used]

Re. *Priority 1*: some clarifications were given. There were no problems raised. There is agreement on Priority 1.

Re. *Priority 2*: some clarification is given: The idea is to make a list of threats on mires/peatlands as many threats often are not recognised as such until it is too late. Secondly, contact between members on specific problems will be improved by streamlining with help of a membership database that includes expertise.

There is a proposal to add to this database of expertise also knowledge on restoration / management. The database should also be mentioned under priority 3.

(side note: A procedure for dealing with IMCG expertise requested from and paid by 3^d parties will be worked out by the EC to be presented to the MB.)

There is agreement on Priority 2.

Re. *Priority 3* (3.1) the importance of other funds than GPI should be addressed.

It should be mentioned that contact with people on the ground is an important part of the IMCG Network.

Jenderedjan points out that any official Ramsar reference website needs to be adopted as such by the Parties, meaning this goal should be set for the year 2005 when there is a CoP (not so in 2004).

(Re. Priority 3.1 / 3.2) Joosten mentions a general point of debate within IMCG of how far and at what speed it should expand to a worldwide network. Discussion starts and disappointment is expressed about the idea that IMCG should *not* expand. Piet-Louis explains the situation in Southern Africa where expansion of IMCG has been very rapid. A lot has been reached in Southern Africa, also on the ground, and it is recommended that IMCG expand globally, repeating the SAfrican success. Joosten mentions that concern is not that people do not *want* to expand, but that the current structure of personal contacts is lost (there is consensus on this). He raises two points for consideration: firstly, the world community has

been and will continue to approach IMCG and IMCG has to acknowledge this influence on regional activities and on its overall development. Secondly, there is the question of how to conserve the effectiveness of personal exchange. The challenge is to develop an organisational structure in which personal contacts remain crucial but that also fits with a global expansion, gaining many more members. Wolejko adds that the concern relates to the IMCG not being able to maintain the impetus of what it has brought about in Europe, but that this is a problem of practical organisation and not of the overall idea behind IMCG.

Reference is made to the MB meeting where the possibility was discussed of other activities/meetings than the Gen. Ass. The nature of a meeting should be made dependent on its goal (cf. Priority 3.3). Then it should be considered that the Gen. Ass. is the strongest political tool of IMCG and that other activities are very well suited for networking.

The proposal to add "Linking to Regional Networks" to Priority 3.2 is accepted.

(Re. Priority 3.4) IMCG is confronted with these issues from the outside. Concerns are expressed on who decides on how to deal with these issues. A policy will need be developed in open discussion and decided upon by the MB. EC will prepare and start this discussion, using Newsletter and Website. Priority 3.4 should be rephrased to read: "IMCG will develop a policy on economic incentives for mire conservation."

(Re. Priority 3.6) Also in case of Benefactors there is a need to develop an IMCG policy (see above). For the time being Priority 3.4 will be skipped from the Action Plan.

Concern is expressed that the Action Plan might be too ambitious and that IMCG might collapse under its weight. Referring to the biennial report, Joosten mentions that a lot of the activities are already underway and that also in the last two years more has been achieved and more people have been mobilised than could have been hoped for. The only concern remains that regional activities should not suffer to strengthen global activities.

Recalling all discussed changes and concerns expressed, the IMCG Strategy and Action Plan is adopted by the General Assembly.

Main Board election

The procedure of election of the new MB is explained to be in accordance with the IMCG Constitution as discussed during the MB meeting of 19.07.2002. The new MB is adopted by acclamation and is herewith officially installed.

Discussion on the procedure is delayed to point 10 of the agenda.

Resolutions

In light of time constraints this agenda point was moved to after dinner; Point 9 of the agenda was moved forward.

Next venues

Piet-Louis refers to the Symposium (talk of Althea Grundling), where the official invitation will be handed out and additional information will be given. Tapio Lindholm extends an invitation to hold the 2006 IMCG Congress in Finland. He presents the rationale behind the Finnish offer. After the 2004 event in South Africa it would be good to return to Europe to keep the majority of the membership involved. A preliminary programme was presented, in which besides the development of mires, also problems of restoration and conservation in Finland will be addressed. The offer is not made to compete with the South American one, but the question is asked to find possibilities to combine the two.

Joosten reads out the invitation from Tierra del Fuego to organise the IMCG Congress in 2006.

The proposal is brought forward to have the IMCG Congress in Finland and an IMCG Workshop addressing regional problems in TdF. Such construction of having regional meetings in between the Biennial General Assemblies is welcomed. The problems of the Argentina government and their current difficulties to provide funds are mentioned. The preparation of an event in TdF shall address these problems.

The invitation of Finland to organise the Biennial General Assembly of 2006 is accepted by acclamation. In 2005 or 2007 a workshop will be organised in TdF.

Resolutions (revisited)

All available resolutions were projected on the wall and read out a loud. Amendments and changes were proposed and discussed. The drafters will have time to incorporate any points of criticism before the draft resolutions will be presented for final adoption on Monday 22.07.2002.

Any other business

MB has scheduled following items for any other business:

- a. Global Peat Initiative (GPI)
- b. Procedure of resolutions
- c. Constitution (election etc.)

Sliva proposes to add a point on

- d. a proposal concerning internal publication of the membership list.

Global Peat Initiative

Minaeva presents the GPI, expressing concern with procedures and the practical organisational structure. Currently GPI can only sponsor projects in UN DAC-1 countries or projects of a global nature. This is, however, general policy of DGIS (Ministry of Developmental Affairs, Netherlands), at present the only one providing funds. The need to raise more funds (not only of DGIS) is stressed and the opportunity is pointed out to use the Ramsar CoP in Valencia as fundraising platform.

The EC will write a letter of concern to the GPI managing team.

Minaeva is preparing an IMCG project portfolio with global activities carried out by IMCG as such. These include "GPI Website" and "Global Peatland Distribution". Other projects by IMCG members include a project on Maputland and phase 2 of the IMPESA project (both Sliva). Contacts in Georgia, Mongolia, and Kyrgistan have been mobilised to apply for GPI funds.

Procedure of resolutions

Jan Sliva proposes that in light of the weight of Resolutions, the MB/EC develops procedures to tighten the schedule and to introduce deadlines. This to make sure there is enough time to improve. Support is expressed. Bragg raises the point that the meeting stimulates the development of Resolutions and that this process should not be disturbed by too strict rules. The point shall be put forward to the MB.

Constitution

this point is moved to the next day, after the adoption of the Resolutions (where it was decided that Joosten will prepare an article for the IMCG Newsletter to start discussion involving the whole membership).

Membership list

Sliva proposes to ask all members whether they want to be made known to other members on an internal membership list that also includes fields of expertise. The proposal is accepted.

A meeting of members of the new MB is scheduled on 22.07.2002; Joosten will prepare an agenda.

On Monday 22.07.2002 the General Assembly was continued in a special meeting concerning the Resolutions that now were edited and presented again for adoption:

- Poland: adopted
- Czech Republic: adopted
- Latvia: adopted
- Sweden: adopted
- Russian Federation: adopted
- Republic of South Africa: adopted
- Finland: content adopted, phrasing will be revised
- France: adopted
- Hungary: content adopted, phrasing will be revised
- EU: adopted

All drafters will send addresses to which the Resolutions should be sent to the secretariat.

A Global resolution dealing with the successful peat-campaign in the UK and calling on all countries to repeat its success was put forward by Richard Lindsay. The idea was that essentially this resolution fell apart in two parts:

- a congratulatory letter to the UK government and the British peat campaign
- an article for the Newsletter on the history and success of the UK peat campaign

There not being any other business and recalling the various points of discussion relayed to other forums, the meeting was closed.

Discussion on the IMCG constitution

by Hans Joosten

Since Quebec 2000, the freshly adopted IMCG constitution has been subject of debate. Also in Besançon 2002 various constitutional issues were vividly discussed, but we had insufficient time for a proper exchange of ideas. As the constitution can only be changed during a next General Assembly, the Besançon General Assembly decided to continue the discussion in the Newsletter. This also enables members not present in Besançon to participate. In this contribution I want to present some ideas on what – to my opinion – are the major points of discussion and what aspects of the constitution can be improved.

General remarks

After having worked with this constitution for two years, my general conclusion is that the constitution is rather complex, in some aspects incomplete, and sometimes vague, inconsistent in its wording, and contradictory.

The unclear structure of the constitution becomes apparent when you have to find specific rules (how is this and that organized?). The incompleteness is illustrated by the failing provision of a vice-chairmanship in case the chairman falls away (which regretfully has happened...). The inconsistency appears from the different terms used for the same concepts, e.g. the “objectives” and “objects” in art. 2 versus the “goals” in art. 4.2. Another example of inconsistency is art. 9.3 that says that the Main Board may co-opt a maximum of 7 members, but that no more than 1/3 of the members may consist of co-opted members. Art. 9.1, however, states that the Main Board consists of maximally 15 members. This combination of conditions is mathematically or nonsense or editorial mishap.

All these things can be simply resolved without much discussion. Next to these, I see four real points of discussion:

1. Who may be members of IMCG?
 2. How shall the IMCG chairman be elected?
 3. Should a (s)election of Main Board members take place if the number of candidates is less than 15? What are the terms of the Main Board members (incl. EC members)?
- 1. Who may be members?* With respect to this question the current constitution is ambiguous. Art. 4.2 states that ordinary members must be “individuals”. From the wording of articles 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.7 one could conclude that art. 4.2 implicitly excludes “organisations” from IMCG membership. According to Art. 4.6, however, the membership is available “to any natural or legal person”. Art. 5.1 then again says, that the membership is “personal and therefore non-transferable.”

The question to decide is therefore, whether members of IMCG shall only be individuals, or that also “legal

persons” (organisations, companies, societies) may be member of IMCG.

IMCG has always claimed to be a network encompassing “a wide spectrum of expertise and interests, from research scientists to consultants, government agency specialists to peatland site managers.” This phrasing implies that persons can be member not only as civilians interested in mire conservation but also as government agency specialists, i.e. representing the agency. If that is so, the situation does not really differ from letting the agency itself be a member. If we would accept corporate members, the voting procedures may have to be adjusted.

2. How to elect the chairman? With respect to the election of the chairman, I see three options:

- a. election by the Main Board: this is the situation according to the constitution in force election by the General Assembly, i.e. by the members present at the General Assembly meeting election by all members, as is presently the case with the election of the Main Board. To my opinion choosing between these options is a matter of optimising between efficiency and democracy.

With respect to a) *election by the Main Board* the following aspects may be considered:

- this option leads to 15 potential candidates for chairmanship (i.e. all members of the Main Board) that have to decide jointly on who of them has to/may do the job
- in this way a chairman can be “identified” that represents a consensus view (bridge function) in the organisation instead of “just” having the majority of the votes the chairman is part of the package of the full Executive Committee instead of being “imposed” to the other people who have to do the work. Next to a matter of optimal task allocation, this is also a matter of compatibility of personal chemistries it requires confidence in the intelligence of the elected Main Board members and in the degree to which they represent the society.

With respect to b) *election by the General Assembly meeting* the following aspects apply: this option enables an intensive personal discussion on candidates the discussion is, however, largely restricted to the members present at the meeting it is (looks?...) more democratic than the “Main Board” option only the members present at the General Assembly, i.e. only a (non-representative?) selection of members, can vote the option (generally) generates less candidates than the “Main Board” option

- if only one candidate is available no election can take place.

With respect to c) *election by all members* the following is relevant: this option directly involves all members and is therefore the most democratic

- it involves the most complicated voting procedure, but this technical aspect can be mastered via email and snail mail voting
- this option (generally) generates less candidates than the “Main Board” option

My personal preference is election by the Main Board, because it provides the best opportunity

- to select the most representative chairman from the largest number of democratically chosen candidates and
- to construct the most efficient Executive Committee.

3. *Less than 15 Main Board candidates?* The present constitution only provides for voting between candidates (i.e. selection) when there is an “excess” of candidates. If there are less than 15 candidates, all candidates automatically become Main Board member and there is nothing to vote. This has happened in the 2002 procedure.

Such statute implies that every “nut,” even without support of other members, can become Main Board member. The General Assembly indeed has the possibility to immediately dismiss such “nut” from the Main Board by a majority vote of two-thirds of the votes cast (art. 9.5), but everybody will agree that this is not an elegant construction.

This risk of getting too few candidates is related to the general reluctance within IMCG to actively approach candidates for standing for Main Board, as some consider such preparation of elections to be “undemocratic” or even “stalinistic”. Not approaching sufficient suitable candidates, however, may lead to situations that are even more undemocratic, because no election takes place at all (cf. 2002).

In Besançon 2002 the General Assembly has accepted the new Main Board by acclamation and has thus expressed its trust in it. This was an elegant act for which, however, the constitution does not provide, i.e. without it the new Main Board would also have been installed.

It has been suggested that when no (s)election can take place because of lack of candidates, every candidate has to be voted for or against by the General Assembly. I think that such construction would be unnecessarily polarizing: there is a reason that election normally only involves positive votes, not negative ones.

Another suggestion was that the Main Board or a special “council of wise people (M/F)” discuss the optimal representation of the next Main Board and systematically approaches potential candidates to take care for sufficient candidates. Many good candidates just do not spontaneously nominate themselves for a Board position for all kinds of reasons, but are available when they are actively approached. Candidates could then also be approached following criteria like geographical distribution (related to number of members in these regions?, cf. district voting systems) expertise (botanic, hydrologic, ecologic, management, education, diplomacy, action...) availability of time (minimum required involvement?...)

- representation of various IMCG factions
- etc.

In my opinion the latter formula is not undemocratic because

- also members that are not approached by the commission can still nominate themselves for MB membership
- the members anyhow have to vote on all candidates individually.

4. *Terms of MB members* Art. 9.6 of the constitution states: “Members of the Main Board shall normally be appointed for a period of no more than three terms. In this context, “one term” shall be a period between two consecutive biennial General Assembly meetings. The members of the Main Board shall step down in conformity with a schedule set by the Executive Committee. Any member of the Main Board who steps down in conformity with the schedule shall be eligible for immediate re-appointment.” This time the EC has decided to let all Main Board members step down in 2002, but many other options are open, e.g.

- Fixing a longer minimum period of MB membership, e.g. every MB member remains at least 4 consecutive years
- Fixing a maximum period of MB membership, e.g. every MB member may not be longer in function than 8 consecutive years
- Overlapping terms, e.g. every two years half of the MB steps down.

Appeal

If we want to adopt an improved constitution in our next General Assembly in South-Africa (2004) we should timely know what has to be changed and why. Therefore: the Newsletter floor is open for comments, ideas, and contributions. You may also want to contact the Main Board (addresses on page 27).

Minutes Meeting (Old) Main Board Members

19.07.02, Besançon France

Before the General Assembly, the (Old) Main Board members present in Besançon met to discuss organisational issues. Present were Piet-Louis

Grundling, Philippe Julve, Ron Hofstetter, Leslaw Wolejko, Hans Joosten, Jan Sliva, Michael Steiner, and Tatjana Minaeva, whereas some other IMCG

members participated in the meeting. Some highlights of this meeting are reported here.

The agenda and a proposal for a chairman of the General Assembly were discussed. The Main Board will propose to the Gen. Ass. to continue without membership fee. A call for donations will be made.

Election of the Main Board

A central issue of discussion was the election of the Main Board. Michael Steiner questioned the procedure followed to arrive at the new Main Board. According to article 9.1 of the IMCG Constitution, as the number of candidates did not exceed the number of vacancies and as only positive votes may be cast, the appointment of the new Main Board has been according to the rules. Michael Steiner complains this practise is not like in any democracy he knows. Leslaw Wolejko points out that Michael Steiner, like any other member, has had a chance to address this issue and make constructive proposals to the Main Board and the Gen. Ass. The item could then also have been placed on the agenda of the Gen. Ass. Michael Steiner points out that according to his opinion the MB should represent the whole society. Therefore every member should have the support of the majority of the membership. Tanja Minaeva states that MB membership is not an honorary function but means that work and time have to be invested. Leslaw Wolejko proposes that a discussion on the current constitution is started by the EC to deal with these issues (accepted). The EC will develop the procedures to deal with changing the constitution. Discussion on the subject will be held under the agenda point 10 (any other business) during the Gen. Ass.

Also any discussion on the procedure of MB election is proposed to be moved to agenda point 10. Michael Steiner is unwilling to express his problems with the constitution under point 10.

Election of chairman

According to Steiner, he has – already before the 2000 Québec meeting – made his IMCG and MB membership conditional on a change of the constitution with respect to the election of the chairman. Such discussion was never held. Joosten mentions that this discussion was started in the

Newsletter in December 2001 but that MB/EC did not receive any reactions. Furthermore, also Steiner could – certainly as MB member – himself have started discussion on any subject. The discussion is for now put on hold because of time constraints.

Resolutions

The proposal to present the resolutions to the General Assembly on Sunday and to vote on them in an extra session on Monday is accepted. This will give people time to rewrite problematic parts and to think the resolutions over before accepting them. Native speakers are asked to assist in preparation of the resolutions.

Jan Sliva proposes to have a discussion on the procedure of resolutions under agenda point 10.

Next venues

Piet-Louis and Althea Grundling will present their official invitation for 2004 at the Gen. Ass.

There are two offers to organise the 2006 event: Finland and Tierra del Fuego.

An event in Tierra del Fuego would strengthen the membership there and is supported by developments in conservation and use of peat worldwide.

Tapio Lindholm presents the rationale behind the Finnish offer. After the 2004 event in South Africa it would be good to return to Europe to keep the majority of the membership involved. The offer is not made to compete with the South American one, but the question is asked to find possibilities to combine the two. A preliminary programme was presented, also addressing problems of restoration in Finland.

Wolejko raises the point that if there is a concrete issue to address, this might decide on the format of a meeting. Grundling is in support of holding the next meeting in the northern hemisphere to find a balance between geographic interests and involvement of the largest possible number of people. Minaeva points out that the Gen. Ass. is the strongest political tool of the IMCG and that it should be used wisely. Other tools can be envisaged to uphold the network.

The two proposals will be presented to the Gen. Ass. for consideration. Hans Joosten will present the TdF offer, Tapio Lindholm the Finnish offer, Julve will handle the agenda point.

Minutes Meeting (New) Main Board Members

22.07.02, Besançon France

During the General Assembly the (New) Main Board members present in Besançon met to discuss organisational issues. Present were Ron Hofstetter, Olivia Bragg, Piet-Louis Grundling, Jan Sliva, Tatiana Minaeva, Leslaw Wolejko, Hans Joosten, Philippe Julve, and some other IMCG members

This meeting was only convened on short notice. As Main Board meetings shall be announced 30 days before, this meeting was not an official Main Board meeting, but rather a meeting of Main Board members. As, however, a majority of the members were present, it was decided that in principle decisions could be put forward by this majority to those not present for comment and approval.

Election of Executive Committee

Main Board members were asked for which positions they are available and for which they wish to stand. There are 5 positions within IMCG-EC: Chairman, Secretary General, Treasurer, Additional Member (2 positions).

- Ron Hofstetter, Rodolfo Iturraspe, and Leslaw Wolejko have already expressed that they will not be standing for any position within IMCG EC.

Other Main Board members have expressed following:

- Olivia Bragg is available for all positions within EC
- Stuart Brooks is available for all positions within EC
- Piet-Louis Grundling is available for a position as additional EC member
- Hans Joosten is available for the position of Secretary General
- Philippe Julve is available for the position of Treasurer
- Tatiana Minaeva is available for a position as additional EC member
- Jan Sliva is available for all positions within EC

Joosten will send out a letter to those Main Board members who have not yet made their willingness explicit. This letter shall be answered within 3 weeks. Then a list of available candidates will be send around by the secretariat. Asbjorn Moen will collect the votes. Votes must be cast within 4 weeks.

Co-opted Main Board Members should have the same rights as those voted. Objections have in the past been raised, however, against co-opting managing members. Julve proposes to only co-opt Main Board members after the election of the IMCG-EC. This proposal is agreed and will be

communicated for comment and approval to the remaining Main Board members not present.

In future clearer deadlines will be needed for people to stand as candidate for the IMCG-EC. This time only requests were made, which some (former) MB-members have not yet replied to. This means a 3 week deadline will now have to set for these people to make their (un-)willingness known, further delaying the election of the IMCG-EC and thereby the completion by co-optation of the MB. Until elections are concluded, the current IMCG-EC will remain in place.

Some personal thoughts and opinions were expressed on who should occupy the various positions within IMCG-EC. Wolejko stresses that such personal opinions can be expressed, as IMCG is not only a formal organisation but also still a group of friends. Some thoughts on who should be chairman are exchanged.

Co-optation of Additional Board Members

Co-optation of Main Board Members can only be done in a Main Board meeting, that is convened 60 days in advance. A virtual MB meeting will be convened to deal with this issue after the election of the IMCG-EC.

There are three applicants for the two vacant MB positions:

- Tapio Lindholm (Finland),
- Faizal Parish (SE Asia), and
- Jenny Whinam (Australia)

Considerations for co-option might be:

- geographical distribution of MB members
- expertise of applicant
- involvement of applicant

Lindholm would be good to have on the MB in light of the upcoming 2006 General Assembly in Finland. Parish would represent SE Asia; it should be considered, however, that in SE Asia strong regional networks are operating that have good links to IMCG. As such a representative on the MB is not a necessity. Whinam has good contacts to the regional network in Australia including parts of SE Asia. With her IMCG representation in Australia and surroundings would be continued now that Kath Dickinson is no longer on the MB.

Those MB members present generally agree on co-opting Tapio Lindholm and Jenny Winham. (The General Assembly was informed of this and no objections were raised.)

The new IMCG Executive Committee

In the past weeks the procedure for electing the new Executive Committee has largely been completed and the results of the votes are such that the final outcome will not change anymore.

Jan Sliva has been elected new Chairman, Hans Joosten and Philippe Julve remain on their posts as

secretary-general and treasurer respectively, whereas Tatiana Minaeva fills the first of the two vacancies of additional EC members. All these persons therefore continue their EC activities, be it Jan in a somewhat different position. As new person on the screen is Stuart Brooks, who fills up the last EC vacancy.

IMCG Resolutions adopted in Besançon, France

During the 10th IMCG biennial meeting in Besançon France, a total of 10 IMCG resolutions was adopted (see minutes General Assembly, elsewhere in this Newsletter). Below are 5 of the resolutions as they

have been sent out. The remaining 5 will be published in the next Newsletter. The resolutions will also be put on the IMCG website.

IMCG Resolution for Latvia

The International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG) is a worldwide organisation of mire (peatland) specialists who have a particular interest in the conservation of peatland habitats. The IMCG willingly places its advice and expertise at the disposal of any government seeking to establish or maintain mire conservation programmes.

The IMCG held its 10th biennial General Assembly in Besançon, France, in July 2002. At that Assembly the following resolution was adopted with respect to the current provision for conservation of mires in Latvia.

We appreciate the ongoing activities to protect mires of Latvia in the face of increasing pressure for their utilization in the whole Baltic region. The 8th field symposium and General Assembly of the IMCG was held in Latvia in 1998, and we had the pleasure of visiting Latvian mire sites. Since that time, the National Programme of Biodiversity was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2000, and provides guidelines for planners of sectoral development and municipalities. It includes a Strategy and Action Plan for conservation of natural biodiversity. In 2002, the mire habitat conservation plan is being prepared. However, the following additional needs to ensure the conservation of mire biodiversity are noted:

1. No new mires in Latvia should be planned for peat mining. Peat extraction must not be allowed on protected areas, even under exceptional circumstances. The whole ecological and hydrological system of each particular mire site should be included in the area designated for protection.
 2. Most of the protected peatlands in Latvia are ombrotrophic mires (raised bogs). More attention should be paid to establishment of new protected areas that include minerotrophic mires (fens). Particular attention should be paid to the valuable spring mires that are highly sensitive to human activities.
 3. Regular funding should be provided for management planning of protected mire sites. Administrative capacity should be raised also to implement management measures.
 4. Latvia lacks an up-to-date peatland inventory. The existing dataset is based on an old nation-wide peat survey at a scale that is unsuitable for conservation purposes, and urgently needs revision. Research projects are needed to update the information on biodiversity values, hydrology and geology of peatlands in Latvia.
 5. Awareness of the value of mires should be improved, in schools and universities as well as amongst the society. Introduction of university courses on mires would make a valuable addition to higher education, and establishment of a mire museum and information centre is desirable. Also, publication of a book on mires of Latvia would be welcomed by the international mire conservation community, as well as providing a useful resource for educational initiatives.
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IMCG Resolution for Sweden

The International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG) is a worldwide organisation of mire (peatland) specialists who have a particular interest in the conservation of peatland habitats. The IMCG willingly places its advice and expertise at the disposal of any government seeking to establish or maintain mire conservation programmes.

The IMCG held its 10th biennial General Assembly in Besançon, France, in July 2002. At that Assembly the following resolution was adopted with respect to the current provision for conservation of mires in Sweden.

The national wetland inventory

1. The IMCG notes with approval that funding is in place to complete the wetland inventory for the lowland part of the county of Norrbotten. However, it is a matter for concern that the wetlands of the alpine region of Sweden have not yet been surveyed for the national wetland inventory. Although threats to these sites currently appear to be slight, completion of the inventory is advisable in order to provide a basis for countrywide knowledge of the wetland resource.
2. Sweden has made a large investment in the national wetland inventory. Unfortunately, the data are not easily accessible to interested parties. The IMCG would appreciate a move by the Swedish government to ensure that the data will be easily accessible, for example within a modern electronic database that is available via Internet. There is also a need to analyse the data, and to make the results available.

Site protection (especially the National Mire Protection Plan and Natura 2000)

1. IMCG has learned that several high quality sites from the National Mire Protection Plan have not been included in the Natura 2000 list, and recommends that all remaining sites with suitable habitats should be proposed as Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) and that those with qualifying ornithological conservation values should become Special Protection Areas (SPAs).
2. The IMCG commends the initiative of the Swedish National Mire Protection Plan, but has noticed that during the last ten years the land acquisition issues have been solved for less than 15% of the unprotected area and that the situation with regard to the formal establishment of nature reserves is similar. The Swedish government is asked to facilitate progress in establishing the protection of the sites that remain unprotected.
3. We have also noted that there are some important mire sites in the Mire Protection Plan, for example Fjällmossen (Skåne) and Hammarmossen, that have suffered hydrological disturbance resulting in lowering of the water table. We recommend that restoration work should be undertaken on such sites in order to achieve their long-term favourable conservation status.



INTERNATIONAL MIRE
CONSERVATION GROUP

IMCG Resolution for Czech Republic

The International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG) is a worldwide organisation of mire (peatland) specialists who have a particular interest in the conservation of peatland habitats. The IMCG willingly places its advice and expertise at the disposal of any government seeking to establish or maintain mire conservation programmes.

The IMCG held its 10th biennial General Assembly in Besançon, France, in July 2002. At that Assembly the following resolution was adopted with respect to the current provision for conservation of mires in the Czech Republic.

Peatlands, as water-driven environments, have been developing in Czechia for the last 13,000 years. They occupy less than 0.3 % of the area of the country, but they include a broad variety of mire types whose specificity and uniqueness is irreplaceable for the sustainable evolution of European biodiversity. The international network of Ramsar sites includes important representatives in the Czech Republic, but would be significantly enhanced by addition of the site Rašeliniště Krušnohorí (Mires of the Ore Mountains), for which a national agreement has not yet been reached. IMCG recommends rapid processing of the proposal for the mire Rašeliniště Krušnohorí to become a Ramsar site.

The extent of peatlands in Czechia has been reduced substantially in recent decades, and their protection has been recognized as an urgent need by the government. This was established in national legislation in 1992 (Law 128/1992). However, proper execution of this law is hampered by conflict with law 61/1956 Sb. on peat extraction, which allows extraction to proceed beyond the point at which irreversible damage to the natural functions of the peatland system occurs. Moreover, a robust mechanism to ensure that practice complies with the law is needed. With regard to preparation of the new Law on Nature Protection for the Czech Republic, IMCG recommends retraction of the law of 1956 and preparation of a detailed programme for scientific evaluation and monitoring of the conservation conditions of Natura 2000 and non-Natura 2000 peatland sites.



IMCG Resolution for Poland

The International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG) is a worldwide organisation of mire (peatland) specialists who have a particular interest in the conservation of peatland habitats. The IMCG willingly places its advice and expertise at the disposal of any government seeking to establish or maintain mire conservation programmes.

The IMCG held its 10th biennial General Assembly in Besançon, France, in July 2002. At that Assembly the following resolution was adopted with respect to the current provision for conservation of mires in Poland.

The IMCG notes with approval the 2001 revision of the Nature Protection Act and especially the associated lists of protected species and habitat types which contain the majority of important wetland habitats. We welcome recent progress in developing the network of protected mire sites within National Parks, Landscape Parks, Nature Reserves and Ramsar sites; and we encourage the new prerogatives that enable local (communal) authorities and the State Forest Administration to establish protected areas on the basis of ecological importance. We also commend the activities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in ensuring mire protection, especially the Coalition for Wetland Protection, the Nature Club, OTOP (Polish Society for Bird Protection), REC (Regional Environmental Centre) and WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature), as well as the regional organisations e.g. PTOB (North-Podlasie Society for Bird Protection) and the Biebrza Society.

However, IMCG notes that there are three problems related to the protection of mires that require urgent attention:

1. We note that new opportunities for integrated protection of valuable wetlands arise from the large-scale land ownership changes that have taken place since 1989. Many of these wetlands lie within the large area of previously cultivated land that is now held by the State Land Ownership Agency (AWRSP). Although this land has limited economic value, the mechanism for assessing its nature conservation value, and for protecting the valuable wetland sites, is largely unsatisfactory. IMCG urges the Polish government to install the legal and administrative mechanisms that would enable the successful transfer of unused State-owned land to nature conservation where appropriate.
2. Poland lacks an up-to-date peatland inventory. The existing dataset is based on an old nation-wide survey at a scale that is unsuitable for conservation purposes, and urgently needs revision. Its usefulness would be greatly enhanced by adding the smallest mires, many of which have escaped disturbance and so are important for nature protection. Since the majority of these mires are hidden in forest areas, the introduction of mire expertise into the State Forestry Service would make a significant contribution to the protection of Poland's most valuable wetland sites.
3. We are concerned to hear that a law to enable afforestation of disused agricultural land has recently been adopted. In view of past experience of the disastrous impacts of such legislation on mires and wetlands in other European countries, we urge the Polish government to ensure that a full assessment of nature conservation value is undertaken prior to granting permission for afforestation of all such land.

REGISTER

Please fill out the IMCG registration form.

Surf to <http://www.imcg.net> or contact the secretariat.

IMCG Resolution for South Africa

The International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG) is a worldwide organisation of mire (peatland) specialists who have a particular interest in the conservation of peatland habitats. The IMCG willingly places its advice and expertise at the disposal of any government seeking to establish or maintain mire conservation programmes.

The IMCG held its 10th biennial General Assembly in Besançon, France, in July 2002. At that Assembly the following resolution was adopted with respect to the current provision for mire conservation in South Africa.

The IMCG notes with approval the developments in South Africa since the IMCG meeting in Quebec, August 2000 adopted the first resolution on South African peatlands (as acknowledged by DEAT communiqué dated 01 August 2001):

- Especially the enforcing of relevant environmental legislation (Environmental Impact Assessment, Environmental Management Plans and Wetland Reserve Determinations) concerning peat mining applications, as well as
- The development of the Peatland Eco-region map and database by the National Department of Agriculture.
- Recent progress in developing methodology for a wetland inventory in South Africa by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), that will contribute to the mire conservation objectives of various international organisations, including Ramsar, IMCG, IUCN and Wetlands International.
- We encourage new initiatives (and support from DEAT) on peatland conservation and research in South Africa and in the southern African region, such as government departments (in the Peat Working Group) and NGO's (Mondi Wetlands Project and various Friends of Wetlands Groups), as well as the international IMPESA project (IMPESA - Identification and Mapping of Peatlands of Southern Africa).
- We commend the activities of the Working for Wetlands partnership (DEAT, Working for Water Programme and the Mondi Wetland Project). The Working for Wetlands programme is setting an international example in establishing wetland awareness and poverty reduction by rehabilitating and restoring peatlands and wetlands.

However, IMCG notes that there are two problems related to the protection of mires that require urgent attention:

1. South Africa does not have an up-to-date National Peatland Management Plan. Present wetland related legislation is fragmented between different departments, and peatlands are not directly described in any of the relevant environmental legislation. This situation leads to inefficiency in:

- the enforcing of legislation and policy,
- the monitoring of impacts and exploitation, as well as
- the co-ordination of involved departments on all levels of government.

We therefore urge the South African government to ensure:

- a full strategic environmental audit of peatlands in the country, including
- the industrial, horticultural and subsistence utilisation of peat and peatlands and
- a re-evaluation of relevant legislation.

2. We note with concern the latest developments of the proposed storage dam of the Braamhoek Pump Storage Scheme in the Watervalvley mire (peatland).

We welcomed the news, in March 2002, that the South African government had upheld the appeals against the proposed Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme. We recognised it as a decision of international importance due, not only to the world wide degradation of peatlands, but also due to the significance of the Watervalvley on an intra-African scale. A European representative of the Executive Committee of the IMCG visited the wetland on 24 March 2001 and confirmed the significance of this peatland.

We certainly understand and support the concept of clean electricity and the responsibility of the South African government to supply energy to previously disadvantaged communities. However, at the same time we need to voice our concern about the reopening of the application by ESKOM and the potential destruction of the Watervalvley peatland.

We would like to request a detailed study on the peatland component of the wetland by an acknowledged peatland specialist. We further believe that ESKOM is ignoring the occurrence of peat in the wetland, and that ESKOM's proposed mitigation measures are thus fatally flawed.

We request advice as to whether ESKOM utilised the latest GIS technology and techniques in the selection of this specific site.

Peatlands, like most wetlands, are under severe pressure internationally and urgently require additional protection (cf. Ramsar Recommendation 6.1 & 7.1). The IMCG is willing to make its expertise available to the South African government to assist in these matters and looks forward to visiting a pristine Watervalvley peatland during its 2004 Congress.

Ramsar CoP VIII



Ramsar member countries meet every three years to assess the progress of the Convention and wetland conservation to date, share knowledge and experience on technical issues, and plan their own and the Bureau's work for the next triennium. These are called Meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COPs), and there have

been seven since the founding of the Convention. The 7th COP was held in San José, Costa Rica, 10-18 May 1999, and the eighth meeting of the COP will be held in Valencia, Spain, 18 to 26 November 2002.

All documents for Ramsar COP8 are available in HTML, PDF and MSWord format on the Ramsar website: http://www.ramsar.org/index_cop8.htm.

All draft resolutions and working documents for the plenary session are available in the three official languages (English, French and Spanish) but most information documents are available in English only.

Major success Saving Irish Bogs

by Catherine O'Connell, IPCC

In 2002 the Irish Peatland Conservation Council are celebrating 20 years since their formation in 1982. In 20 years of IPCC's work it's no surprise there are some stunning success stories to tell. Here are just a few of them

1982 – IPCC started

IPCC started working to save our endangered peatlands. The result: a 2,400 per cent increase in the area of protected peatlands in 20 years. One of the greatest conservation achievements of the save the bogs campaign in Ireland is in the area of peatland owned and managed for nature conservation. In 1982 this was 1,794ha, and in 2002 this has been increased to 42,884ha thanks to the sustained lobbying of the IPCC.

1986 – Clara bog

The first major victory in the Save the Bogs Campaign came with the protection of Clara Bog, Co. Offaly, the largest raised bog in the country. The site was drained by Bord na Móna as part of a plan for its development. IPCC fought alongside David Bellamy for its protection and it was declared a national nature reserve by Minister Noel Tracey T.D.

1987 – People

IPCC raised awareness of the links between people and peatlands. With the Dutch-Irish travelling exhibition De Venen Geturfd-The Wild Beauty of Bogs, IPCC and our sister organisation, the Dutch Foundation for Conservation of Irish Bogs tour an exhibition which brings the message of peatland conservation to one million people over a five year period. During this time the exhibition visited 36 venues in Ireland and the Netherlands.

1989 – Peat-free sustainable living.

IPCC in liaison with the Peatlands Campaign Consortium launch a joint campaign aimed at

eliminating the use of moss peat from raised bogs in gardening and horticulture. The campaign results in the development of a variety of peat-free growing media and composts, the protection of raised bogs and a growing awareness among the general public of the need to garden without peat and compost the organic material produced in their homes.

1990 – IPCC lobbying pays off

As testament to IPCC's determination, vigorous lobbying culminated in the country's leading peatland developer - Bord na Móna - agreeing to sell 2,000ha of raised bog to Dúchas the Heritage Service to be managed for conservation.

1992 – Education

IPCC achieves a landmark education goal with the publication of the curriculum linked Peatland Education Pack. IPCC works directly with schools and the Department of Education and Science providing resources and training on the conservation and wise use of peatlands.

1995 – Major Connemara Bog Purchase.

IPCC in liaison with the Dutch Foundation for Conservation of Irish Bogs, Dúchas, and the European Union purchased 198ha of Clochar nag Con Bog in Co. Galway. Our action was a stimulus to the local community and the semi-state development body Údaras na Gaeltachta to designate a further 626ha of land for conservation in this wonderful area of blanket bog.

1997 – Frogs

IPCC launches the Hop to It Irish Frog Survey, its first national research project to raise awareness of wetlands. Frogs are synonymous with wetlands and the national frog survey, conducted by school children helped to identify habitats and breeding sites

for this species. Protecting the country's wetland biodiversity is a key objective of the IPCC.

1999 – Fenor Bog

IPCC helps local people benefit directly from peatland conservation. Working with the Móin Fhionnúrach Development Association, based in Co. Waterford, IPCC provided funding for the purchase and management of a 32 acre fen known as Fenor Bog, which was going to be developed for a dump. As part of a management plan developed by the IPCC and the local community group, a visitor boardwalk and information signs are being provided on the site.

2000 – Fens

IPCC initiate a major research project to devise a National Inventory of Fens of conservation importance. The information gathered from the work identified fens of international conservation importance which were not previously recognised.

2001 – Action Plan

IPCC leads a visionary plan to save Irish peatlands. IPCC's action plan will ensure that planning permission is prevented for activities that threaten to damage conservation sites; that Government funds

better management and rehabilitation of peatland Natural Heritage Areas and than an outreach education programme focusing on the value of peatlands to all sectors in society is developed.

2002 – Habitats Directive and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

A principal campaign objective of IPCC is to work with national Government and the European Union to ensure that the Habitats Directive is fully implemented in Ireland. Our work focusing on 12 different peatland habitats has ensured that a representative sample of 200,000ha of peatland sites have been given SAC designation. This activity provides a statutory basis for the protection of our unique peatlands in perpetuity.

To mark the 20th Anniversary of the IPCC, we have published a book entitled *Celebrating Boglands*, a unique blend of art, prose, science, poetry and music inspired by the boglands by an international group of 36 contributors. Copies of the book are available from IPCC, 119 Capel Street, Dublin 1 for EUR 37 including postage and packing.

SWS Ramsar Support Grant Program

First Announcement

The Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS) is soliciting proposals for their Ramsar Support Grant Program. The grant program was established to advance Ramsar Convention objectives, including the selection, designation, management, and networking of Ramsar sites; and the promotion of Ramsar's Wise Use guidelines. Two to four projects are funded each year at a level of US \$5,000 on a competitive basis as reviewed by an evaluation committee.

Only applicants working on Ramsar-related activities in less-developed countries are eligible to receive grants under this program, and priority is given to applicants from countries that are on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Development Assistance Committee (DAC) List of Aid Recipients.

Grant guidelines, an application form, and a description of previous grant awards can be found on the SWS web site at:

www.sws.org/regional/international/Ramsar.Support.Framework

or you can request these materials from:

Eric Gilman,
Society of Wetland Scientists International Chapter,
2718 Napuaa Place,
Honolulu, HI 96822 USA,
egilman@lava.net

Applications must be received by 1 November 2002. SWS will announce decisions in December 2002, and will award funds soon thereafter.



INTERNATIONAL MIRE
CONSERVATION GROUP

Regional News

News from Russia: Peat fires

As you may already know, large fires are raging through European Russia, affecting forests and peatlands. At the moment Tatiana Minaeva is very involved in negotiations with different authorities about the peat fires, and currently cannot provide us with a well structured article. But she informs us about the following situation:

In the past several years, peatland fires have been a regular phenomenon in Russia. The regions most affected by the fires were Tver, Vladimir, Ryazan', Nizhnij Novgorod, and North-West region. It is still difficult to get estimations of the total area and number of fires, but we are dealing with not more than 500 ha for the whole European part during one year. The cut over fen in the Olenin rajon in Tver, which was the object of the 1997 IMCG Fen restoration Workshop, has been burning for three years already.

The difference this year is only that the smoke reached the Kremlin. This is why there is so much to do about the fires. The causes of the fires lie in the unclear situations of ownership and responsibility. There are large areas of anthropogenic peatland landscape without any owner or user. Fen peatlands were used as agricultural fields but are out of use now. Lands where peat was extracted were abandoned without re-cultivation and left to the management of local administrations of rayons which normally have no money to maintain lands.

In 99 % of the cases a fire starts outside the peatlands and is caused by forest visitors, hunters, tourists, or by the strange habit to burn hay on the fields and along the roads. The legislation is very loose and nobody is punished. People visited the forests even when the fire situation was obvious.

Now the government is making plans to decide the problem once and forever, mainly through the Ministry for Emergent Situations. It is planned to flood the entire Meschera lowland, an area of around 5 000 sq. km (east north of Moscow region, Vladimir and Ryazan' region). The peatlands here have been under extraction since the 19th century. The project includes transporting water from Siberian rivers, drilling 300 m deep wells, constructing dams on the Oka river, and covering the peatlands with a suspense of water and mineral ground. In the project tender only organisations responsible for technical projects take part and the ecological component is sorely lacking from the plans.

The peatland conservation movement in Russia is monitoring the process and will try to interfere where necessary. In that situation we have support from dacha (summer house) owners – 90 % of dachas in the region are on extracted peatlands and people do

not want to be flooded – and from peat extractors who wish to continue extracting peat.

A very good case could be the implementation of a project addressing these ecological and social problems. Within the GPI first phase a preliminary project on the Meschera national park was developed (12 000 ha – 10 % of the park territory are black deserts of extracted peat fields). The project showed that restoration of one hectare of peatland costs less than 400 dollars in Russia. That includes the creation of seminatural landscapes and recreation zones (fishing ponds, hunting areas, agricultural grasslands, and resting places for migratory birds etc.).

It is a pity that in GPI phase 2, DGIS cannot to finance the project. An investor is sought for the Tacino peatland (3000 ha). All ideas and advise concerning fundraising are welcome.

The next Newsletter will feature figures and data about the fires in Russia.

For recent satellite pictures of the fires surf to:
http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/NaturalHazards/natural_hazards_v2.php3?topic=fire

News from Ireland: Peat-free Garden Campaign Report 2002 Launched

A report just released by the Irish Peatland Conservation Council calls on moss peat producers to develop and market a wider range of peat-free composts, such as bark mulch, coconut fibre and compost manures, to cut down on the use of peat in gardens. Moss peat is mined from raised bogs, the most threatened peatland in Ireland. Over 90% of this habitat has been lost to conservation.

The 108 page report documents the progress made over the past 6 months in kicking the peat habit in Irish gardens. The report also calls on garden centres to sell more peat-free composts, on Local Authorities to encourage more households to make their own compost from their organic waste, and on Government agencies to ensure that moss peat extraction no raised bogs of conservation value is halted.

The Peat-free Garden Campaign report contains information concerning the extraction of moss peat in Ireland; the attitudes of various garden interest groups regarding peat-free composts and the availability of peat-free garden products in Ireland. It also makes recommendations for actions that will increase the use, quality and availability of peat-free composts.

The main findings and achievements of this campaign documented in the report are:

- Eighteen commercial peat-free garden products are now available in Ireland, ranging from soil improvers to composts and mulches. These can fulfil every gardening need.
- Composting amongst Irish households is on the increase as people become increasingly aware of the environmental benefits of making home compost. Compost bins can be purchased from your Local Authority.
- Peat could be phased out completely in state owned Irish properties and gardens open to the public if these groups would switch to using coconut fibre and leaf mould to germinate seeds and propagate cuttings.
- Irish peat producers are under increasing pressure, primarily due to the public's demand for peat-free products in the UK, to research and develop a range of environmentally friendly peat-free composts, soil improvers and mulches.
- Government policy in the UK has stipulated that by 2011 peat will no longer be a constituent in gardening products. Prior to that, there will be a phased withdrawal of peat from these product groups.

Copies of the report in CD format can be purchased for Euro 100 from the IPCC, <http://www.ipcc.ie>

Decision on permission for peat extraction welcomed

The Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC) has welcomed last week's decision made by An Bord Pleanála, that the extraction of peat from Killamuck Bog, Abbeyleix, Co. Laois is not an exempted development, and in fact requires full planning permission and an environmental impact assessment to be undertaken.

In their appeal to An Bord Pleanála, Bord na Moná contended that the development of this bog was exempt from the need for planning permission and an environmental impact assessment, as drainage commenced prior to the Planning and Development Act 2000 and that the bog had been effectively developed.

IPCC outlined in their submission to An Bord Pleanála that due to the scientific importance of this bog and the significant impact that peat extraction will have on the bog and surrounding area, the correct planning procedure should be followed and that a full and proper Environmental Impact Assessment should be undertaken. In addition, pre-drainage works undertaken over 10 years ago on the bog should not be regarded as full development of the site.

Because Killamuck Bog has active bog vegetation, it is worthy of protection. An independent scientific study of this bog has revealed a very rich variety of plants and animals. There are a large number of note worthy species present, some listed in the EU Habitats Directive.

News from Great Britain: JNCC launch Habitats Directive resource

A new electronic information resource, "The Habitats Directive: Selection of Special Areas of Conservation in the UK," which describes sites in the United Kingdom recognised as internationally important for habitat and species conservation at European level, has been launched by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). It replaces a JNCC report published in 1997, since when the number and extent of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) has increased substantially.

The information is now on JNCC's website at <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/SACselection>, and will be updated whenever the UK submits new data about candidate SACs to the European Commission. As well as up-to-date details of the selected sites throughout the UK, users will be able to find out about the SAC selection process, and the habitats and species represented by SACs. It is now possible to search for information in various ways, for example by feature name, site name, or geographically.

The pages have links to other information from JNCC and elsewhere on the web, and also include a range of supplementary material, with a downloadable spreadsheet allowing users to answer complex queries themselves.

For more information contact:
Colin.McLeod@JNCC.gov.uk

English Heritage launches wetlands strategy

On 28 May 2002, English Heritage, the Government's statutory adviser on the historic environment (sponsored by the Ministry for Culture, Media and Sport - DCMS), organised in London a seminar on the historic environment in England's wetlands at the occasion of the launch of its Wetlands Strategy, introduced by Adrian Olivier. A handful of speakers, representing archeology and historical science, as well as ecology and the administrative bodies responsible for cultural and natural heritage management (English Heritage, English Nature), covered current issues, practice and policies for better integrated management decisions, and debated what can be learnt from the past in shaping the future. The Ramsar Bureau was invited to present the new "Guiding principles for identifying the cultural aspects of wetlands and incorporating them into the effective management of sites," proposed to COP8 for adoption.

English Heritage had earlier commissioned the "Monuments at Risk in England's Wetlands" (MAREW) report to identify the state of 13,400 archeological monuments in wetlands, without counting those non-identified monuments remaining deeply buried in the alluviated lowlands and beneath upland peat. 78 per cent of this identifiable resource has been damaged or destroyed in the past 50 years through drainage, water abstraction, conversion of

pasture into arable land, peat wastage, erosion and extraction, and urban and industrial development. English Heritage's Wetlands Strategy will thus develop guidelines and manuals for wetland landscape conservation in partnership with other agencies, produce an inventory of the most important wetland monuments in England, promote site-specific conservation management strategies, encourage public participation and community involvement, and assist the European Archeology Council (EAC) in formulating guidance for wetland heritage management at a continent-wide scale (cf. www.ramsar.org/wwd2002_rpt_archaeology.htm). The discussion amongst the sixty or so participants, how to get the balance right, showed a widespread consensus on the need to take an ecosystems approach and to converge different cultural and natural perspectives in order to bring originally incompatible interests together to find sustainable solutions. With this Wetlands Strategy, England shows the way how to integrate historical aspects into wetland management and conservation, providing a useful case for the forthcoming discussions during COP8, when preparing for the adoption of the proposed guiding principles. The strategy is available at www.english-heritage.org.uk/archaeology/wetlands/ (reported by Thobias Salathé, Ramsar Europe)

News from Sweden: Sweden designates 21 new Ramsar sites

At the 7th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in San José in 1999, Sweden pledged to add 21 new Ramsar sites before the next COP, and it has now fulfilled that promise. Twenty-one new Wetlands of International Importance, totaling 125,870 hectares, have been added to the List, and nine of the thirty existing Swedish Ramsar sites have had their boundaries extended, in some cases significantly. Among the new sites, 12 have significant areas of peatland. The new sites are located in nearly all parts of the country. Sweden, now with 51 Wetlands of International Importance, has leapt past Italy, Ireland, Denmark, Spain, Canada, the Russian Federation, and Germany to third place in the total number of Ramsar sites (behind only the UK and Australia) – its total number of hectares under the umbrella of the Convention is now over half a million, at 514,500. The Convention itself, with its 131 Contracting Parties, now has 1171 Ramsar sites (with two more already approved and ready to be added to the List), totaling 96,454,325 hectares.

Below are short descriptions of the 12 new sites that have significant areas of peatland:

1) Alopökölen-Köpmanökölen. Jämtland; 20,100 ha; 62°39'N 013°35'E. A representative example of a natural non-forested peatland in the EU alpine region, the site consists of a large mire complex southwest of

Lake Storsjön. Amongst the diverse kinds of peatlands and wet forests, solid ground 'islets' with a large number of dead *Pinus sylvestris* give the area a "distinct wilderness feel". Ornithological values are high, and the large carnivores *Ursus arctos*, *Gulo gulo*, *Lynx lynx*, and *Canis lupus* have been observed. Like much of northern Sweden, the area and its surroundings are used for reindeer husbandry by the local Sami population. Ramsar site no. 1113.

2) Dalälven-Färnebofjärden. Västmanland, Gävleborg, Dalarna; 17,300 ha; 60°13'N 016°47'E. The lower part of the River Dalälven where it emerges from a hilly landscape onto a more flat and open countryside, widening and forming a series of broad, shallow pools. Situated at the limit of the vegetation regions of northern and southern Sweden, the site has a rich diversity of riverside meadows, birch and alder fens, raised bogs, and fens. Flooding is common, and flood control is an important function of the site. The fauna is also diverse, especially in birds and fish species, and the mosquito *Aedes rossicus* is present in its largest populations in Sweden. Because of the wilderness character of the area, its diverse fauna, and attractive landscape, it is well known for birdwatching, hiking, canoeing, and fishing. Ramsar site no. 1116.

3) Dumme mosse. Jönköping; 3,350 ha; 57°47'N 014°01'E. This large, diverse peatland complex is representative for the region and situated in a sandy flatland with eskers. In the northern end of the site, near the Domneå dam, 164 bird species have been observed, of which 90 are nesting fairly regularly. Ramsar site no. 1117.

4) Emån. Kalmar; 1,580 ha; 57°09'N 016°22'E. The lower reaches and mouth of the Emån river, containing many representative wetland types and extraordinary fish diversity. The river is broad and calm in most places, with large seasonal variations in water levels and annual flooding of large areas. It is one of the largest continuous wetland areas in the country, with vast areas of reeds, marshy meadows, waterlogged areas, and meadows bordering the river. The river valley has been put to human use since the Stone Age and several sites are of national interest for cultural history, including remains of an early barrage near the mouth of the river. Conditions for recreation and tourism, especially sport fishing, are very good. Ramsar site no. 1118.

5) Fylleån. Halland; 910 ha; 56°40'N 012°55'E. The site encompasses the lower parts and mouth of the river Fylleån on the west coast, largely untouched by hydrological interventions and with good water quality. Interesting plant life is supported by old meanders, overgrowing oxbow lakes, and regularly flooded wetlands, as well as by the well-preserved sand dune landscape at the coast. The river is highly valued for its richness in nationally red-listed salmon *Salmo salar* and brown trout *Salmo trutta*, for both of which it provides important reproduction sites. The coastal stone fields contain graves from the early Iron Age in Scandinavia, and there are a large number of archaeological and ancient cultural remains in the

area. Because of the open landscape, scenic beauty, diverse nature, and richness in monuments, the area is highly valued for recreation and tourism. Ramsar site no. 1119.

6) Komosse. Jönköping, Västra Götaland; 4,070 ha; 57°41'N 013°42'E. This large, diverse, and little exploited peatland, with representative flora, fauna, and wetland types has been described as one of the most valuable peatland complexes in northwestern Europe. Wide soaks are common and there is a large pool system that is unusual for this part of the country. With its natural qualities and little human impact, the site is very valuable as a research area for national and international mire researchers in both hydrology and botany. Ramsar site no. 1121.

7) Mossaträsk-Stormyrän. Västernorrland; 950 ha; 63°50'N 017°19'E. One of the largest forest-peatland complexes in northeastern Sweden, the relatively flat landscape contains a large, well-developed string flark fen with large flarks and waterlogged areas. As the site is largely unaffected by human activities, water quality and ornithological values are high. As a nature reserve since 1998, a management plan is in place and the site is included in the National Mire Protection Plan. Ramsar site no. 1124.

8) Oldflån-Flån. Jämtland; 10,100 ha; 63°48'N 013°48'E. A large, unexploited area in northwestern Sweden near the Norwegian border, holding very high ornithological values and a valuable mosaic of wetlands and forests. The site is located in the pre-alpine area, with hilly moraine landscapes and a wide variety of wetland types. The Oldflån area is a highly differentiated mire landscape with several different kinds of mire complexes, such as 'soligenous' fens and peatland forests, with many solid ground 'islets' frequently with virgin *Picea abies* forest. The Flån area is a mosaic complex with fens, small lakes, and solid ground 'islets', including topogenous fens, mixed mosaic mires, string flark fens, and peatland forests. Like many parts of northern Sweden, the area is subject to reindeer husbandry by the local Sami population. Ramsar site no. 1126.

9) Storkölen. Dalarna; 7,040 ha; 61°47'N 012°13'E. An undisturbed area of high wetland diversity, rich in lakes and waterlogged areas, greatly valued for its scenic beauty, old forests and high ornithological values. There are large systems of flark pools within the sites, and pools and fen soaks are common. Re-introduction of bean goose *Anser fabalis* has been carried out successfully. Connection to the nearby Kvisleflået proposed Ramsar site in Norway suggests the possibility of a transboundary Ramsar site. Ramsar site no. 1129.

10) Sulsjön-Sulån. Västernorrland; 350 ha; 62°36'N 016°50'E. Consists of a lake (Sulsjön) and part of the narrow, winding Sulån river, with surrounding mires and small water bodies. The river is one of the most valuable sites in Sweden for the endangered freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*, with some 220,000 individuals. A preliminary snowmobile track has been marked across the reserve

to canalize mechanized visitors. Ramsar site no. 1130.

11) Tönnersjöheden-Årshultsmyren. Halland, Kronoberg; 12,300 ha; 56°46'N 013°19'E. A large wetland complex with a high diversity of wetland types of several different developmental stages, located in the most humid region of southern Sweden. The site contains raised bogs, small lakes, fens, fen soaks, meandering streams, wetland meadows, wet forests, and solid ground islets covered by forest. Forestry, agriculture, and grazing are practiced; two military training areas are present but are subject to conservation-oriented management planning. Ramsar site no. 1131.

12) Tysjöarna. 19/11/01; Jämtland; 410 ha; 63°14'N 014°36'E. Two lakes surrounded by a diverse area of mires, wetland forests, coniferous forests, mixed forests and meadows. Flora along the shorelines is extremely lime dependent, and lowered water levels have exposed large areas of marl, supporting an alpine-like vegetation. The first observation in Sweden of the rare moss *Bryum wrightii* was made here in 1992. The site is considered one of the most species-rich localities for resting and nesting waders and ducks, and it is a well-destination for ornithologists. Ramsar site no. 1132.

News from the Mediterranean: MedWet: Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative

Under the aegis of the Ramsar Convention On Wetlands and with the support of the European Commission, the MedWet Initiative was conceived in the beginning of the 1990s as an experiment in long-term collaboration, on many levels, among governmental and non-governmental organisations and individuals; a joint venture, as an integral part of the efforts for the conservation and wise use of the Mediterranean Basin.

Visit the homepage of MedWet, surf to:
<http://www.medwet.org>

MedWet Training CD-Rom

A Training CD-ROM for trainers of wetland management planning has recently been released by the regional facilitation unit of the MedWetCoast project. Providing training support on a CD-ROM is an efficient and cheap means to spread knowledge, to distribute background information, to increase local capacities, and to prepare specific training sessions at local level. The disc, containing both French and English versions, helps designers and conductors of national management training programmes. It contains two main parts, on the one hand it provides materials to train trainers and on the other hand the materials needed to prepare training programmes on wetland management planning.

The first part contains materials for people in charge of training in protected areas necessary to set up and run a 2-day training course, including instruction sheets, technical documents and guidelines, how-to-do folders, and other support materials. Everything can be printed as Word, Excel, or Powerpoint files. The second part provides technicians involved in the preparation of management plans for protected areas with the materials needed to draw up a management plan, based on a 4-day training session. Again, instruction sheets for trainers, management plan methodology and guideline documents, examples of concrete management plans, socio-economic diagnosis reports, logical framework analysis demonstration kits, and background documents on participation of local communities in management of protected areas are provided. Other documents cover issues such as what is monitoring, how to make a presentation, and course assessment questionnaires. The training programmes and documents have been evolved from the long-standing field experience by specialists of the Tour du Valat Foundation and ATEN, the technical bureau for protected areas in France. They are based on the MedWetCoast project regional training course held in March 2002 at Azraq in Jordan, together with the Royal Jordanian Society for the Conservation of Nature.

Copies of the CD-ROM can be ordered at ATEN in Montpellier, Fax +33 467 52 77 93, aten@espaces-naturels.fr.

(reported by Thobias Salathé, Ramsar Europe)

News from China:

Peatland Rehabilitation in Ruergai Plateau

by Faizal Parish, GEC

The Ruergai Plateau is in western China and sits at about 3500m on the eastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. I was working with Wetlands International and the State Forestry Administration advising the local government on peatland management (with support of the Global Peatland Initiative). The plateau contains about 500,000 ha of peatlands which play an important role in the hydrology of the upper catchment of the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers as well as supporting key biodiversity and more than 30,000 tibetan herders and several million yaks and sheep. The peatlands comprise blanket and basin peat of 1-8 m in depth. Most of the peat is derived from sedges and other herbaceous wetland plants.

Some of the peatlands were drained in the mid 1970s and this has degraded some of the areas of importance for conservation as well as reducing the water supply/flood control functions. In addition there is a problem of the cattle opening up the surface of the peatland to access groundwater or sources of streams particularly in dry periods.

The local government has expressed strong interest in examining options to block the drainage canals (1-3 m wide and 1-2 m deep) and rehabilitate the peatlands. Simple practical options are needed which can be implemented locally at minimum cost to block canals, introduce simple water control structures and rehabilitate degraded peat surfaces and provide alternate water supply to cattle.

If anyone has the information on potential designs of water control structures, or any related materials on peatland restoration, grazing and water management in peatlands, I would appreciate if you could send to me via email at

fparish@genet.po.my or fparish@pd.jaring.my

News from Japan and China

On 15 July, Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC) announced that it has recently established a company in China's Sichuan Province that will specialize in the mining, processing, and export of peat for use in combating high urban temperatures and enhancing soil quality in arid regions.

Sichuan Toyota Niton Development Co., Ltd. was set up in the city of Chengdu and intends to obtain rights to mine peat – with its excellent water- and nutrient-retention properties – in Sichuan's Yuexi County. The company is now building processing facilities and plans to start operations in January 2003.

The peat shall offer firm root support with a water-retention rate and period of water retention under dry conditions that are several times those of ordinary soil. TMC has ascertained that the peat is ideal for use in rooftop greening projects in Japanese cities, many of which suffer from the so-called heat-island phenomenon and deluges caused by excessive rainstorms. TMC has also determined that the peat can be used to improve soil quality in places like the Middle East, where water is scarce.

TMC independently decided to undertake the new venture in view of the benefits peat mining would have on the development of western China and the boost export of the material would give the Chinese economy. Target export destinations include Japan, the Middle East and the United States.

In Japan, Toyota Roof Garden Corporation, which was established last December as a rooftop greening business and which has already completed five construction projects mostly in Japan's Chubu region, will not only use the Yuexi peat in its projects, but will also serve as its exclusive distributor, marketing it nationwide as a material for gardening and soil improvement. The company, which is also a seller of lavender and other popular flowering plants, opened a Tokyo office in May, further strengthening its sales operations.

Sichuan Toyota Niton Development is building two plants, one in Yuexi County for primary processing, i.e., separating out gravel and sand and pulverizing the peat for shaping it into pellets, and the other in

Chengdu for secondary processing, i.e., sterilization and pellet production. The company aims to earn a fiscal year profit by its second year of full operation, anticipating net sales of 360 million yen (24 million yuan).

In the fields of biotechnology and afforestation, TMC already operates a flowering-plant business in Japan and an afforestation business in Australia and is currently endeavouring to commercialise its Indonesian sweet-potato-based biodegradable plastics operation, which also produces livestock feed. TMC sees the new peat business as strengthening its base in these 'green' fields.

News from Indonesia: Peatland forest fires

Like in 1997, forest fires have been spreading in Borneo since mid-July. The 1997/98 fires sent a thick, choking smog across neighbouring countries. Then, as now, the cause was plantation companies setting fire to tinder-dry forest during drought triggered by an El Niño event.

Burning is the most likely method for clearing land. But once fires start, they will be harder to put out. And as peat burns incompletely, it causes haze. The figures from 1997 show about 15 per cent of forest fires were in peatlands, and that these contributed to about 60 per cent of the haze then. The burning could continue underground for years.

News of the resumed fires comes as the UN Environment Programme revealed new findings from an investigation of a near-permanent cloud of "brown haze" across southern Asia. It can reduce the solar energy reaching the Earth's surface by up to 15 per cent, altering the Asian monsoon, reducing harvests, and killing as many as a million people a year from respiratory diseases, UNEP reported.

The new fires in the Central Kalimantan province of Indonesian Borneo will add substantially to the haze in the coming months. The fires also threaten the home of probably the world's largest remaining population of orang-utans, an endangered species.

The fires will also contribute to the build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. It is estimated 1.7 billion tonnes of carbon was released from Borneo peat bogs during the 1997 fires. That is equivalent to almost a third of the global emissions that year from fossil-fuel burning.

It is not always cheaper to use fire to clear the land, because much of the soil nutrients are lost and it is expensive to replace. But fire is still somewhat cheaper for clearing small plots of between two and five ha, and for very large lots of primary forest. Four companies have indicated that they are willing to try alternatives.

Experts said that there is a need to look deeper into haze issues. These include establishing accountability for the land, decentralisation of provinces and stricter action against those who burn.

Indonesia has fewer than 400 forestry officials policing 30 million ha of protected forests, and the country's annual budget to protect each hectare works out to about 20 US cents. Despite the danger burning poses, the experts said, a total ban on it is a no-go because bigger blazes could result, if the political situation catches fire.

Unsupported by the government, deep wells have been installed to tap water and wet the peatland surface. The idea is to create firebreaks to protect villages and wildlife habitat.

Millions of dollars have been spent investigating the fires of 1997 and the damage they did. But no-one is putting any dollars into tackling the causes of the fires and fighting them when they occur.

The 1997/98 fires caused the region total losses of US\$9 billion, and affected the health of 75 million people altogether.

For recent satellite pictures of the fires surf to: http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/NaturalHazards/natural_hazards_v2.php3?topic=fire

News from South Africa: Mires, South Africa and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)

Well we in South Africa had quite a hectic 2 – 4 week before and during the WSSD from 26 August to 4 September 2002. It was 2 weeks of talking, looking, listening, and thinking (and sometimes eating...) sustainable development. For many of us "sustainable" centres on conservation, but it became clear that many others stress the "development" along the lines of exploitation.

Peatlands and mires do not feature *per se* in the WSSD Political Declaration and WSSD Implementation Plan, but wetlands are covered in various related issues ranging from fisheries, natural disasters, agriculture and water.

Watervalvley Mire and the WSSD

ESCOM appealed during this hectic time to the Pretoria High Court to overturn the minister's previous decision not to allow the building of the dam in the Watervalvley Mire under Section 36 of the Environmental Conservation Act no 73 of 1989, read with the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act no 3 of 2000. The High Court made a ruling that placed the ball back in the hands of the minister. The minister must evaluate all data (including any new data) and Interested and Affected Parties had until 20 August 2002 to submit new data/evidence/proposals to the minister.

The minister was under heavy work pressure due to the WSSD and all parties agreed to extend the date of making the ministers decision known to 4 October 2002 – we will inform IMCG newsletter readers about the latest developments.

It was frustrating that we were not able to use the WSSD to highlight the plight of this wonderful mire.

We approached EarthLife Africa (Greenpeace co-worker NGO in South Africa) during the WSSD for support, as well as various newspapers, environmental TV shows etc, but all were too busy fighting their own battles or reporting great events on the WSSD. One such event was the environmental function hosted by ESKOM on conserving water and the declaration of ESKOM together with (amongst others) the South African National Parks Boards, on the conservation of national resources!

IMCG involvement in the WSSD

The IMCG were directly involved in the WSSD through an environmental poster competition involving 1500 primary schools in the Gauteng Province. The competition was organised by the Departments of Education and of Water Affairs and Forestry. This competition aimed at making school children aware on the water and wetland issues around the WSSD. Individual IMCG members sponsored the 2nd and 3rd prizes of the different categories through individual contributions from the IMPESA project.

The IMCG logo was displayed on these posters that were presented at some of the WSSD stands of the Departments of Education and of Water Affairs and Forestry. The IMCG and IMPESA had a small display at the prize giving ceremony.

Mires, peatlands, and the WSSD

The Rietvlei peatland was featured on one of the showcase tours of the WSSD. The tour was well visited during the Summit. Major interest was experienced from countries from the East and by media from across the world. Some of the delegates attending were Mr Blasco from Ramsar, the World Bank's director on environmental matters, members of IUCN and WWF and various politicians from the European parliament and beyond:

WSSD tour to the Rietvlei Wetland Rehabilitation Project

The Rietvlei Wetland Rehabilitation project lies within the Rietvlei Nature Reserve – owned and managed by the City of Pretoria/Tswane. The Rietvlei Dam provides 15% of Pretoria's water and the area contains Bankenveld – grassland under threat in the Gauteng region.

The rehabilitation of Rietvlei is important because it:

- Promotes wastewater purification through the natural systems of reeds and peat.
- Addresses the control of alien, invasive plant species
- Protects vital habitats associated with the globally important grasslands biome.
- Exemplifies innovation in combating land degradation.
- Stems the emission of carbon stored in the peat substrate, and
- Creates wetland awareness and education.

Rietvlei addresses poverty through labour intensive job creation and capacity building while the conserving water resources of a dry country. 60% of its budget is spent on the poor. 60% of its workforce is women. Sixty people are employed on a budget of R 1 million for 11 months of the year by WfW and an additional 20 – 30 people for an additional 3 months of the year on a Landcare budget of R 250 000 per year. It is intended that the wetland will be rehabilitated to such an extent that only maintenance is necessary. It is also hoped that trained workers will be able to run their own businesses after funding ends.

The Rietvlei wetland rehabilitation project is part of "Working for Wetlands." It is a partnership between the Working for Water Programme (Department of Water Affairs and Forestry), Department of Environmental Affairs & Tourism (DEAT), Mondri Wetland Project, as well as the Rietvlei LandCare Programme and City of Tshwane.

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VISIT THE IMCG HOMEPAGE AT

<http://www.imcg.net>

New and recent Journals/Newsletters/Books/Reports

Valéry, R. & Ponsero, A. (eds.) 1999. Entre terre et eau. Le Marais de Lavours. Entente Interdépartementale Ain, Isère, Rhône, Savoie pour la Démoustication, 176 p. EURO 15.

Colourful book about the origin, history, human exploitation, flora and fauna, and current management of the Marais de Lavours, an almost 500 ha large peat- and wetland area in the region Rhône-Alpes (France). Special is the attention to the fight against mosquitos. The institute responsible for this regional "demoustication" is also managing the site.

Coïc, B., Frappa, F. & Laza, L. 2001. Tourbières en Rhône-Alpes – Un patrimoine commun à gérer. Conservatoire Rhône-Alpes des Espaces Naturels, Vourles, 48 p.

Overview of the types and distribution of mires and their values in the French region of Rhône-Alpes. For more information: cren.rhonealpes@wanadoo.fr

Gaudillat, V., Hauray, J., Barbier, B. & Peschadour, F. (eds.) 2002. Tome 3. Habitats humides. Cahiers d'habitats Natura 2000. Connaissance et gestion des habitats et des espèces d'intérêt communautaire. 457 p. La Documentation française. EURO 38.

The third volume of a series devoted to the description of habitats and species of European Community importance (Habitat Directive) in France. This volume covers the wetland habitats in France and includes detailed information (with extensive bibliographies) of the characteristics, vegetation dynamics, associated and neighbouring habitats, geographical distribution, developmental tendencies and potential threats, and management aspects of all the relevant habitat types of European importance. Contact: www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr

Michaelis, D. 2002. Die spät- und nacheiszeitliche Entwicklung der natürlichen Vegetation von Durchströmungsmooren in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern am Beispiel der Recknitz. Diss. Bot. 365, Cramer, Berlin, 188 p. EURO 50.

PhD thesis including a detailed temporal and spatial macrofossil analysis of the (currently drained and agriculturally used) Recknitz valley peatlands (Eastern Germany). Special attention is paid to the reconstruction of the vegetation and Holocene developmental dynamics of percolation mires and their reaction on the Baltic Sea Litorina transgressions. Large areas of the mire were covered by rather uniform vegetation related to the Drepanoclado-Caricetum diandrae-lasiocarpae. The first Litorina transgression lead to the deposition of

brackish Phragmites-peats, calcareous muds, and Cladium peats up to a distance of 18 km from the Baltic Sea. The perspectives to restore percolation mires are discussed.

For more information: dierkm@uni-greifswald.de

Blicke aufs Moor: Katalog zu den Ausstellungen im Handwerksmuseum Ovelgönne. Isensee Verlag, Oldenburg, 80 p.

Catalogue of an exhibition on the peatland colonisation, use, and culture of the Wesermarsch area (Germany).

Berge, C., Niekus, M.J.L.Th. & Van Vilsteren, V.T., 2002. Der Tempel im Moor. Waanders, Zwolle, 132 p.

Book accompanying an exhibition dealing with the manifold of archeological finds from all over the Holocene found in peatlands, including human bog bodies. The impressive exhibition is a joint project of and to be seen in the Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum (Hannover, Germany), the Canadian Museum of Civilisation (Hull-Ottawa, Canada), the Glenbow Museum (Calgary, Canada), and the Drents Museum (Assen, Netherlands).

Siemonneit, B. & Pollak, W. 2002. Tims Zeitreise ins Moor. Geschichten rund um archäologische Funde aus Mooren. Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum, Hannover, 53 p.

Booklet accompanying the above mentioned exhibition with stories and tasks developed for children.

Green, M. 2001. Dying for the gods. Human sacrifice in Iron Age and Roman Europe. Tempus Publishing, Stroud, 224 p. Hardback EURO 42,20, paperback EURO 30,37.

Fascinating collection of data interpreting bog bodies in the light of what is known of other human sacrifices of that time.

The Journal of Wetland Archaeology. 2002. Oxbow Books, Park End Place, Oxford, OX1 1HN, UK. UK£ 15 per year.

A new international journal presented by the Wetland Archeology Research Project and the Exeter Centre for Wetland Research., dedicated purely to wetland archaeology. The journal will publish on all aspects of wetland archaeology and its role within the wider context of archaeological research, including papers on conservation, legislation, and site protection.

Purdy, B.A. 2002. Enduring Records: The environmental and cultural heritage of wetlands. Oxbow Books, Oxford, 320 p. ISBN: 1842170481. UK£ 48 (Special WARP price UK£ 36).

Twenty-seven papers on wetland archaeological research across the world, from America to Europe to Australasia, aim to raise the profile of these fragile environments and the potential they have for shedding light on the past.

Marushevsky, G. (ed.) 2002. Directory of Azov-Black Sea Wetlands, 229 pages, 80 maps, 6 figures, 97 tables.

The Directory includes information on 94 wetlands with a total area of 2,482,963 ha: Bulgaria (10 wetlands), Georgia (11), Romania (9), Russia (10), Turkey (5), Ukraine (37) as well as Moldova (12).

Thirty-two wetlands, totalling 1,945,298 ha, are of international importance and are designated as Ramsar sites. The Directory consists of an introduction and a series of national reports. Each report begins with an introduction that includes general information about the country (area, population, neighbouring countries, climate, biogeographical zoning, administrative division, etc.), a general description of coastal wetlands (location, area, status, protected areas, table of occurrence of threatened taxa in key sites, etc.), information on legislative and institutional bases for wetland conservation and research as well as organisations involved with wetlands.

The site descriptions include basic information on location, area, altitude, wetland type, physical features (geology, geomorphology and soils; hydrology; water quality; climate), principal vegetation, conservation measures taken and proposed, land use and possible changes in land use, disturbances and threats, economic and social values, fauna (including tables on waterbird populations), special floristic values, research facilities, public awareness and education, and criteria for inclusion.

The publication will be available to download from www.wetlands.org/pubs&/nwdnloads.htm within some weeks. For more information contact:

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Rintjema, S., Claassen, T.H.L., Hetteema, H., Hosper, U.G. & Wymenga, E (eds.), 2001. De Alde Feanen. Schets van een laagveenmoeras. Friese Pers Boekerij, Leeuwarden. EURO 23.

Beautiful book on the history and nature of the Alde Feanen, the largest remaining fen area in Friesland (Netherlands) and a future National Park. With special attention to "nature development" (radical

restoration) of wetlands for the otter (*Lutra lutra*) who had its last Dutch refugium in this area, got extinct in the 1980s, and is now being re-introduced.

Ilnicki, P. (ed.) 2002. Restoration of carbon sequestration capacity and biodiversity in abandoned grassland on peatland in Poland. Dept. of Environmental protection and Management, August Cieszkowski Agricultural University of Poznan, 170 p.

Monograph resulting from GPI project WGPI 19 GPI-9a, presenting reviews on greenhouse gas emissions from peatlands, on biodiversity changes and changes of soil physical and hydrologic properties on abandoned peatland grasslands, on land use of peatlands in Poland, and case studies of current land use in seven peatland areas in Poland. 32,7 % of the investigated peatlands have currently been abandoned and are not used any more for agriculture (except for some low-intensity grazing). For total Poland this would amount to 8200 km². A similar situation exists in East Germany, Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia. These changes in land use lead to a gradual decrease of CO₂ emissions, an increase of CH₄ emissions, a significant decrease of the biodiversity of meadow plant communities, and to the deterioration of the life conditions of wetland related bird species.

The data presented indicate that currently 4 – 8 % of the total annual Polish greenhouse gas emissions (in CO₂ equivalents) are caused by CO₂ emissions from degraded non-forested peatlands.

The issues mentioned in the title (restoration of carbon sequestration and biodiversity) are not addressed explicitly in the book, but are planned for a next phase of the project.

For more information: contact Piotr Ilnicki: ilnickip@au.poznan.pl

Kotowski, W.H. 2002. Fen communities. Ecological mechanisms and conservation strategies. PhD thesis, Groningen, 184 p.

Bundle of articles with summarizing discussion. Analysis of the relationships of site characteristics and the occurrence of fen species shows that species assemblages along hydrological and trophic gradients in fens are largely determined by interspecific competition of resources. Field observations, laboratory experiments, and transplantation experiments show that variation in species occurrence is largely and directly related to light availability. Water level and nutrient availability only have less and generally indirect influence. The distribution of species along the moisture gradient is related to their tolerance of anoxia and flooding, whereas the light gradient filters species according to their competitive ability for this resource. Due to a trade-off between efficient use of light vs. nutrients and water, fen plants may be more flexible to water level conditions if they have enough light. These results suggest that

the major impact of low nutrient availability and regular mowing on the biodiversity of fens lies in lowering the effects of light competition.

The second part of the thesis tackles practical aspects of fen conservation, focussing on Poland. 86 % of the Polish fens have been agriculturally drained, whereas the remaining ones are largely endangered by abandonment of management, on-going drainage, and intensive agriculture and forestry. Until now, the national system of nature conservation does not have instruments for active management or restoration. As a result secondary succession causes a decline in fen biodiversity both in and outside the protected areas. Poland's accession to the EU is hoped to bring a solution to these problems.

The thesis also presents a conceptual scheme for the assessment of the restoration feasibility of internationally threatened sedge-moss fens. The criteria include the hydrological regime, the degree of soil transformation, changes in plant communities, and the socio-economic prospects of project continuation. A final chapter analyses the actual extent and share of wetlands in the Polish part of the pan-European ecological network Econet. This network incorporates 66% of all fen peat deposits in Poland and forms a good basis for the Natura 2000 network.

The final conclusion is, that a closer integration of scientific research, active nature conservation, and agricultural policy is required to protect the biodiversity of fen ecosystems.

Wiktor has given a good example of this approach in his recent activities, on which the thesis is based. A thought worthy statement is his tenth thesis: "We tend to neglect values of the typical and favour the rare. In this way, we begin to preserve something when we already loose it."...

For more information: Wiktor Kotowski: w.kotowski@imuz.edu.pl

Ng Tian Peng & Shamsudin Ibrahim, 2001. Common Trees In Peat Swamp Forests of Peninsular Malaysia. Forest Research Institute Malaysia, 97 pp. US\$ 80

This pictorial book is primarily aimed at creating an awareness of the importance of peat swamp forests of Peninsular Malaysia and the need to restore a balance between conservation and wise use of this valuable natural resource. Such an awareness will help to promote sustainable management of existing peat swamp forests in the country. This book provides a brief description of tree species commonly found in such forests with pictorial illustrations of interesting features of individual species. There are also brief notes on the formation, characteristics, hydrology and structure of these forests. From the many illustrations, it can be seen that such forests are rich in tree species of commercial and non-commercial values. This book provides a quick glimpse of this diverse and significant ecosystem in Peninsular Malaysia.

Sopo, R., Tuomanen, S., Selin, P., Väyrynen, T., Rinttilä, R., Marja-aho, J., Mälikorttila, P., Peronius, P. & Suutari, E. 2002. Environmental Impacts Assessment of Peat Production. Instructions for Evaluating the Effects on Nature and Neighbour Relations of Peat Production. - Abstract -. The Association of Finnish Peat Industry, Jyväskylä.

Brochure dealing with the environmental impacts of peat extraction, including the impact on living conditions, health, and comfort (dust, noise, traffic, and social impacts), on nature and natural diversity (vegetation, birdlife, bog types), on landscape, cultural heritage and communal structure, and on other use of natural resources (berry picking, hunting, recreation, reindeer husbandry). Also attention is paid to the after-use of the extraction area

The brochure is an English summary of extensive Finnish instructions.

The full instructions, available on CD in Finnish, can be ordered from the Association of Finnish peat Industries: www.turveliitto.fi

The extensive English abstract is downloadable under:

www.peatsociety.fi/publica/EIA%20abstract.pdf

Verhoeven, J.T.A. 2002. Natte natuur in een schoon landschap. De ecologische functies van wetlands. Utrecht University, Utrecht, 43 p.

Text of the inaugural lecture of Jos Verhoeven as Professor in Landscape Ecology, dealing with the ecological role of wetlands. For more information: Jos Verhoeven j.t.a.verhoeven@bio.uu.nl

Münchmeyer, U. 2001. Zur N-Umsetzung in degradierten Niedermoorböden Nordostdeutschlands unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der N-Mineralisierung und des Austrages gasförmiger N-Verbindungen. Beiträge aus der Hallenser Pflanzenernährungsforschung 5. Grauer, Beuren / Stuttgart, 125p + app.

PhD thesis dealing with the Nitrogen dynamics in drained and rewetted fens. The highest net mineralization rates ($400 \text{ kg N ha}^{-1} \text{ a}^{-1}$) were found under birch forest on drained peat. This is an amount that the forest is not able to take up, which may lead to nitrate leaching and an increased production of gaseous N compounds. At a rewetted fen site with *Phragmites*, such discharge does not happen because of decreased nitrification, and because of uptake of N by the plants. *Phragmites* was shown to transfer the gaseous N compounds directly via the shoots into the atmosphere.

Broll, G., Merbach, W. & Pfeiffer, E.-M. (eds.), 2002. Wetlands in Central Europe. Soil Organisms, Soil Ecological Processes and Trace Gas Emissions. Springer, Berlin, 244 p. EUR 69,95.

Bundle of articles about soil organisms and soil ecological processes in wetlands. The book is divided into the following main chapters: "Wetlands as habitats for soil organisms," "Soil ecological processes in fens and floodplains," "Carbon and nitrogen dynamics in soils with different water regimes," and "Trace gas emissions."

Øien, D.-I. 2002. Dynamics of plant communities and populations in boreal vegetation influenced by scything at Sølendet, Central Norway. Dept. of Botany, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim,

PhD thesis consisting of a bundle of articles, that cover nutrient limitation in fen species influenced by scything, and the phenology and autecology of some orchid species (*Dactylorhiza lapponica*, *Gymnadenia conopsea*, *Nigritella nigra nigra*). Earlier indications that plant growth in the less productive, boreal rich fen communities are limited by P were not confirmed, but possibly natural fluctuations in the availability of P can cause P-limitation in some years

or some parts of the growing season. Intensive scything (1-2 x per year) reduces the longevity of the orchid cohorts substantially. For more information: Asbjørn Moen: asbjorn.moen@vm.ntnu.no

Workshop on Prevention & Control of Fire in Peatlands. Forestry Training Unit, Forestry Dept. Peninsular Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur.

Compilation of papers presented at the Workshop with the same name in Kuala Lumpur, 19th – 21st March 2002., dealing with overview of peatlands issues in SE Asia, with special attention to the causes, effects, and the fight against peatland fires. For more information contact Faizal Parish: fparish@genet.po.my

Schmilewski, G. & Rochefort, L. (eds.) 2002. Peat in horticulture. Quality and environmental challenges. Int. peat Society, Jyväskylä, 382 p. EURO 25.

Proceedings of the Pärnu (Estonia) symposium 3-6 September 2002, dealing with Conservation and commerce, Peat extraction, Quality of peat and growing media, Sphagnum farming, peat and other constituents in growing media, and peatland restoration. Order under: <http://www.peatsociety.fi/publica/publicat.htm>



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UPCOMING EVENTS

See for additional and up-to-date information: <http://www.imcg.net/imcgdia.htm>

International Symposium "Between conservation and use: C.A. Weber and the Augstumalmoor"

Silute (Lithuania), 2-6 October 2002

See regional news in this and previous Newsletters; for further information and preliminary registration contact Hans Joosten: joosten@uni-greifswald.de

The Role of Wetlands in Biosphere Reserves.

Czech Republic 13-18 October 2002

See Newsletter 2002/1 or contact: Eva Jelinkova, Secretary Czech MAB National Committee, Narodni 3, CZ - 110 00, Prague 1, Czech Republic. mab@kav.cas.cz

trees and peat: carbon sources or sinks

Edinburgh, UK, 5 November 2002

Because of the perceived uncertainties, soils rich in organic matter are being avoided for afforestation and reforestation in relation to Article 3.3 of the Kyoto Protocol and subsequent carbon trading. However large areas of such soils have been afforested in the Scottish uplands over the past 50 years and considerable opportunities for woodland establishment remain there today. There are a number of practical questions relevant to the use of soils rich in organic matter for afforestation and research is beginning to provide answers to some of them. The purpose of this meeting is to evaluate what we do know and to define better what we need to know.

For more information contact:

<http://www.ierm.ed.ac.uk/trees/>

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands COP8

Valencia, Spain, 18-26 November 2002

For more information contact: Ramsar Secretariat, Gland, Switzerland; Tel: +41-22-999-0170; ramsar@ramsar.org; <http://www.ramsar.org>

Peat Physics and Chemistry to Resolve Ecological Problems

Minsk, Belorussia, November 2002

International Symposium of IPS Commission IV. more information at:

<http://www.peatsociety.fi/events/events.htm>

European seminar on Natura 2000

Brussels, Belgium, 12 December 2002

Organized by the Green/EFA Group. For more information contact Sandra Jen:

SJen@wfpo.org

High process engineering of extraction, deep processing and use of lake-marsh adjourment

13-15 March 2003, Tomsk, Siberia

For more information contact

sibniit@mail.tomsknet.ru or Ltor@petrol.tomsk.ru

State of the Art in Vegetation Monitoring Approaches, at the Swiss Federal Research Institute WSL

24-26 March 2003, Birmensdorf, Switzerland

For more information contact Elizabeth Feldmeyer-Christe: elizabeth.feldmeyer@wsl.ch or visit <http://www.wsl.ch/land/monitoring/welcome-en.ehtml>

Mangrove 2003: Connecting research and participative management of estuaries and mangroves

20-24 May 2003, Salvador Bahia, Brazil

For further information contact

<http://www.mangrove2003.ufba.br>

24th Annual Meeting of the Society of Wetland Scientists

8-13 June 2003, Hyatt Regency New Orleans, LA

The SWS meeting will focus on the need to understand the interdisciplinary scientific needs and innovative approaches for the stewardship of wetland ecosystems. What approaches are needed to meet the challenges of management across diverse and changing geographical landscapes, socio-political boundaries, scientific disciplines, and varying time scales? The conference will encourage symposia that present interdisciplinary, integrated approaches and technologies for wetland science, assessment, conservation, rehabilitation, and management to sustain wetlands in diverse environments across different continental regions of the world. For further information contact <http://www.sws.org/>

46th IAVS Symposium Water Resources and Vegetation,

8-14 June 2003, Napoli, Italy

For further information contact <http://www.iavs.org/>

Ecohydrological Processes in northern Wetlands

30 June - 4 July 2003, Tallin, Estonia

Educational Workshop at the Institute of Ecology, Tallinn Pedagogical University, Estonia. For more information contact Elve Lode; ICEWetland@eco.edu.ee or visit <http://www.shef.ac.uk/geography/research/wetlands/ICE2003.html>

BES Winter meeting

9 - 11 September 2003, Manchester, UK

The main theme is the unique potential of the wetland archive (or of course longer term monitoring sites) to provide a longer term view of the origins / consequences / severity / treatment of contemporary issues in wetlands. dpearce@brooks.ac.uk