



## IMCG Bulletin: August 2013

### Word from the Chair

Dear mire friends

The year is moving on and most of us are extremely busy doing what we like most: working to research and conserve mires and peatlands. In actual fact some of us are so successful in this that we do not get to the day to day tasks of managing the IMCG and its affairs. To that we as the Executive Committee apologise and we trust to serve you better in future. Hence this 1<sup>st</sup> of a short monthly bulletin the "IMCG Bulletin" with which we aim to improve communication with and between IMCG members. That said, it is in a way a wonderful predicament, in that our members are so active. It is therefore with great pride that we congratulate Hans Joosten, our Secretary-General for being awarded the European Prize for Sustainable Landuse from Alfred ToepferStiftung F.V.S. This prize is awarded in recognition of innovative and exemplary approaches in the fields of nature conservation, agriculture, forestry and associated sciences. The prize giving ceremony took place on 30 August. Read more about this achievement on our website [www.imcg.net](http://www.imcg.net)

This 1<sup>st</sup> bulletin might be a bit too long, but we have quite a bit to share. The decision to bring out a monthly bulletin was taken during the 2012 Andes Field Symposium. It is however, not replacing the IMCG Newsletter which will still be the preferred way to communicate longer regional news, interesting stories on mires not suitable for Mires and Peat (our journal), in depth discussions pertaining to peat conservation, book reviews etc. Talking of Mires and Peat: we appreciate the hard work Olivia Bragg ([o.m.bragg@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:o.m.bragg@dundee.ac.uk)) and her team are putting into this journal and all of us should endeavour to contribute more articles to it.

Please send any contributions for the **IMCG Bulletin** by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.

### Regionalising the IMCG

We are very keen to have IMCG members more active on a regional basis. It is not ideal to coordinate centrally activities of an organisation with a membership of more than 600 in more than 60 countries in all regions of the world. So we want to encourage you to take initiative or participate in national or regional mire and peatland conservation events. If you want to become active, have good ideas or a good story to tell in this regard please email me at: [peatland@mweb.co.za](mailto:peatland@mweb.co.za). We will put you in contact with the Main Board member responsible for your region or other members of your country. Events and stories will be published in the next Bulletin and/or Newsletter.

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### 2014 IMCG General Assembly and Field Symposium

An announcement will follow in the September 2013 Newsletter!

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## News

### **Cropland and Grazing Land Management mandatory for Emission Accounting in Europe**

On 21 May 2013, the European Parliament has decided that its Member States starting from 2021 Member States shall account for emissions and removals from cropland management and grazing land management. Prior to 1 January 2022, the states must provide each year annual estimates of these emissions and removals. Furthermore the EU notes: "Wetland drainage and rewetting cover emissions from peatlands which store very large amounts of carbon. Emissions from degrading and draining peatlands correspond to approximately 5 % of global greenhouse gas emissions and represented between 3,5 and 4 % of the Union's emissions in 2010. Therefore, as soon as relevant IPCC guidelines are internationally agreed, the Union should endeavour to advance the issue at the international level with a view to reaching an agreement within the bodies of the UNFCCC or of the Kyoto Protocol on the obligation to prepare and maintain annual accounts of emissions and removals from activities falling within the categories of wetland drainage and rewetting and with a view to including this obligation in the global climate agreement to be concluded no later than 2015." The decision can be found under: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:165:0080:0097:EN:PDF>

### **Peat Extraction Preference Areas to be removed from regional Developments Plans in Lower Saxony**

The Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Protection of Lower Saxony, Germany announced on 9 April 2013 that it wants to increasingly protect the federal state's peatlands by changing regional development plans. The intention is, according to their press release, to remove all peat extraction preference areas from the regional development plan (Landesraumordnungsprogramm LROP). For climate and nature conservation reasons they will refrain completely from areas foresighted for peat extraction. The process to change the regional development plans has meanwhile been started and is planned to be finalized in 2014. The federal government intends further to define peatlands as natural CO<sub>2</sub>-sinks and by this to end further peat extraction. A current inventory of the raised bogs and fens is intended to be the basis for mire protection in Lower Saxony.

### **IPS Award of Excellence to Harri Vasander**

The Award of Excellence 2013 of the International Peat Society (IPS) was handed over to Professor Harri Vasander from the University of Helsinki, Department of Forest Sciences, during the IPS Annual Meetings in Leiden on 19 June. Prof. Vasander had been nominated by the Finnish National Committee:

"... for his long career as a scientist, expert and lecturer promoting the wise use of peatlands throughout the world. His research area includes mainly mire ecology, carbon gas balance on peatlands and their sustainable utilisation, covering not only the boreal peatlands in Europe, Russia and North America, but also tropical peatlands. Harri has also been a planner and leader in many large international research projects carried out in the EU, Canada, Russia and Southeast Asia, and he has established very wide international cooperation networks. For instance, Harri is one of the pioneers in the research of tropical peatlands, and his studies have essentially contributed to fact that the significance of the tropical peatlands on the world's biodiversity and climate change has become one of the most burning questions in the world.

Harri Vasander is well liked by his students and he is an enthusiastic academic teacher and lecturer in mire ecology and peatland forestry. Harri was appointed to the current position of Professor in Peatland Forestry at the University of Helsinki at the beginning of 2006. He has always had a very wide knowledge on different use of peatlands and very much enthusiasm to promote the sustainable use of these areas not only in scientific

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committees but also in public discussions, not forgetting artistic and cultural aspects.” (Finnish Peatland Society’s nomination).

The IPS Award of Excellence is presented annually for a distinguished contribution by a single person, group or project in any sector of peatland activities. More information can be found at: [www.peatsociety.org/about-us/award-excellence](http://www.peatsociety.org/about-us/award-excellence)

### **Upland Bogs Conservation Conference in York, UK**

A conservation conference on upland bogs will be held in York at St John University on **12 October 2013** on initiative of the People, Landscape and Cultural Environment Education and Research Centre (PLACE). The event will focus on the future of the region’s upland areas, including blanket bogs. Speakers will include:

- Rob Stoneman: The climate catastrophe – peatlands to the rescue
- Vince Carter: Slowing the Flow: the role of woodland in the water agenda
- BlaiseVyner: Managing the historic environment of the moorlands for the future
- Roger Martlew: Upland quarries as past and future landscapes
- Lois Mansfield: Rural Development: supporting the ‘third leg’ for sustainable upland farming
- John O’Reilly: What are upland hay meadows and how do we conserve them?
- Jen Deadman: Farm Buildings of Nidderdale: a Sense of Place in the 21st century?
- Gill Cookson History in Action: the manor court of Danby.

For more information visit <http://place.uk.com/2013/08/place-autumn-conference-the-future-of-the-uplands>.

### **The burning peat swamp forests of Indonesia**

The tragedy in Indonesia continues. A severe set-back for restoration of swamp forests in that region was experienced when Australia recently closed down its major peatland restoration project in Kalimantan, Indonesia. Read more about this on our website: [www.imcg.net](http://www.imcg.net)

### **Indonesia extends logging and drainage moratorium**

On May 13, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono signed a new presidential instruction, known as the Forest and Peat Land Moratorium. It seeks to protect primary forest and peat land — both major stores of carbon — by suspending the issuing of any new forest-clearing permits. The two-year moratorium serves as an extension of a previous presidential instruction which expired on May 20 and is directed at the ministers of forestry and home affairs and the head of geo-spatial information as well as all of the country’s governors and mayors. According to the Ministry of Environment, the forestry industry and the destruction and degradation of peat lands are responsible for around 80 percent of those emissions.

One of the moratorium's goals is to reduce emissions, but according to Nyoman N. Suryadiputra, director of the Wetlands International Indonesia Program (WIIP), that is not working because the restrictions affect only new permits. “Previous permits are still in effect and still (causing) emissions,” he says. Indonesia has approximately 25 million hectares of peatland, nearly half of it already degraded. In 2011 alone, another 3.5 million hectares of peatland was converted into oil palm plantations, Suryadiputra says.

### **RSPO wants members to stop planting on peatland**

Following its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) has in April 2013 added a new criterion, which will require companies to stop establishing new oil palm

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plantations on peatland in order to obtain certification. This happened in the framework of a revision of its principles and criteria (P&C) by the addition of standards on carbon emissions, peatland, pesticides, forced labour, human rights and anticorruption. For companies that already have plantations on peatland, the RSPO has set up a “GHG calculator” to assist companies to assess their carbon emissions to help them designing a way to “repay their carbon debt”. The RSPO has 1,217 members comprising producers, processors and traders, consumer goods manufacturers, retailers, banks and investors, as well as environmental and social NGOs from up to 53 countries, which produce around 40 percent of the world’s palm oil and are processors or users of more than 30 percent (Abstracted from The Jakarta Post, May 13 2013).

### **Ramsar Convention starts African Wetlands Watch bi-annual Newsletter**

The Ramsar Convention Secretariat is pleased to share the first edition of the African Wetlands Watch bi-annual Newsletter <[http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/African-Wetlands-Watch\\_July2013.pdf](http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/African-Wetlands-Watch_July2013.pdf)>. This newsletter is intended to inform its readers on the activities of the Africa Team of the Ramsar Convention Secretariat and monitor the implementation of the Convention in Africa. It shall enhance information sharing among different wetland stakeholders in Africa by providing a platform for discussion on wetland-related issues in the region and facilitate the Ramsar Secretariat’s reporting on specific regional actions to a wider range of actors. The plan is to produce the newsletter in English and French for distribution electronically. Though this first edition has been produced in English only, subsequent editions will be produced in both languages.

### **South Africa’s peatlands suffer from governmental turf wars**

It seems that more harm is done to South Africa’s peatlands by short sighted application of environmental legislation than threats such as development, peat extraction, mining or farming. In 2010 the refusal of provincial environmental officials to isolate a peat fire without an Environmental Impact Study (which would have taken months to complete) has lead to the complete burn out of rare peatland in the Sandveld region, Western Cape Province. The same department continues to fine officials of the department of agriculture for constructing erosion control measures aiming to save various highly threatened Palmiet (*Prioniumserratum*) peatlands in the southern parts of South Africa.

Is legislation aimed at protecting wetlands also hampering conservation and restoration efforts in your country/region? We would like to hear your opinion, please inform us: [peatland@mweb.co.za](mailto:peatland@mweb.co.za)

### **FAO Workshop Report Released**

FAO has published its report of the workshop “Towards sustainable land management practices for peatlands: special focus on drained areas” held in Rome on **7 - 9 May 2013**. The report can be downloaded at [www.fao.org/climatechange/micca/peat](http://www.fao.org/climatechange/micca/peat). The report recommended priority actions including:

- Develop until 2015 a new global map of peatlands (Global Atlas of Organic Soils).
- Standardize the definitions and methods for assessing drained peatlands.
- Conserve undrained peatlands.
- Demonstrate the value of undrained peatlands for food production and livelihoods (e.g. diverse forest products, native fisheries for food and recreation).
- Identify the key regions for advancing the responsible management practices of drained peatlands, mitigating GHG emissions, protecting biodiversity and supporting livelihoods.
- Involve local people in planning peatland management to achieve successful long-term results.
- Develop fisheries and aquaculture as livelihood options in rewetted peatlands.

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- Develop technical guidelines towards the responsible management of degraded peatlands.
  - Identify investments, grants and subsidies for rewetting of drained peatlands.
  - FAO currently develops a “Guidebook towards responsible peatland management practices”
  - Support countries in planning NAMAs on peatlands for development and livelihoods; and
  - Develop collaboration between funding organizations for financing NAMAs from multiple sources.
- For more information, visit [www.fao.org/climatechange/micca/peat](http://www.fao.org/climatechange/micca/peat)

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