



Conclusions from the Conference on Monitoring of Wetlands, 20-22 September 2007, Lепanina, Estonia held in the frame of the Nordic-Baltic Wetland Initiative

and partly organised and financially supported through the INTERREG III A project „Tuned management and monitoring of transboundary protected areas in North-Livonia as a support for local development, WETLIVONIA“

The main aim of the Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative (NorBalWet) established in 2005 is to serve as a communication network for exchange of information and experiences to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands. In Lепanina meeting Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Estonia were represented. The Ramsar Secretariat was represented by the Regional Co-ordinator for Europe, Tobias Salathe. Apologies were received from Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Russia.

The presentations of the short session on Thursday's afternoon focused on monitoring of wetlands. Tobias Salathe from the Ramsar Secretariat introduced the monitoring tools worked out by the convention. Tore Opdahl from the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management introduced an approach to monitoring of protected areas (incl. wetlands) in Norway. Ieva Rove from Latvian Fund for Nature explained how the monitoring system has been changed in Latvia to meet the international reporting obligations. Elve Lode from Institute of Ecology at Tallinn University/Forest Soils Department of Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences told about the possibilities to integrate the elements of Estonian state monitoring systems to the Ramsar site monitoring. Agu Leivits from State Nature Conservation Centre of Estonia introduced work package dealing with wetland monitoring in WETLIVONIA project and an approach for monitoring of the transboundary wetland complex. Mati Ilomets from Institute of Ecology at Tallinn University introduced the levels and scales of wetland vegetation monitoring. During the field excursion on Friday the nature reserves of Kabli, Luitemaa and Nigula were visited.

The conclusions are based on short final discussions of participants of the conference on late Friday evening.





Wetland monitoring

1. The Ramsar Convention is a very important and useful tool for wetland conservation and promotion of awareness and wise use of wetlands. It is important to introduce it more intensively to the public and use more effectively the opportunities of the good and scientifically based guidance on wetland management and monitoring offered by Convention manuals.
2. It is important to create more synergy between management and monitoring practices related to different conventions and directives - Ramsar, Natura 2000, WFD, Helsinki Convention etc.
3. The activities carried out in the frame of Wetlivonia project (Estonia/Latvia) serve as a good example of the transboundary cooperation on wetland management and monitoring which enables to share and use more effectively modern equipment and expertise. The importance of hierarchically structured integrated schemes for wetland monitoring was stressed.
4. As the region's Ramsar sites belong to networks of legally protected areas, these sites can serve as reference areas for rest of the protected areas of similar type. Therefore it is reasonable to implement comprehensive and well designed monitoring programmes for Ramsar sites.
5. Remote sensing and other GIS based techniques are unavoidable for development of wetland monitoring systems. High resolution satellite images together with modern analyse techniques are powerful tools for detecting change of ecological character in wetlands.
6. It is important to co-operate with scientists and experts in that field. The monitoring data gathered at sites must be made available for active scientific and applied use.

NorBalWet

1. Continuation and further development of the NorBalWet is necessary, if the initiative is to survive. The administrations and the coordination group should have further discussions on its structure and format of the cooperation via e-mail during the coming months. Later, there will be time provided during the European Ramsar meeting 3-7 May 2008 in Stockholm for the countries participating in regional initiatives to discuss their priorities for further development.





2. The exchange of information should be more active, regular and dense. It is not enough to meet only once a year. A web-page for NorBalWet has to be developed soon. For example, why not to spread the protocols of the meetings of national Ramsar committees via this website, communicate on specific wetland projects in the region, call for bilateral and multilateral cooperation, etc.
3. It would be practical to add the NorBalWet label to projects, workshops, conferences etc. taking place in the countries of the initiative and to call representatives from the countries participating in NorBalWet to take part.
4. There is a need to identify possible co-operation projects between NorBalWet countries. Case studies and examples of cooperation in the field would be inspiring and could promote the initiative. IMCG field excursions followed by short report are a good example. It is necessary to think about the possibilities to use experts from other countries or outside of the initiative, to involve more NGO-s (as they often have capacities which administration do not have), to share expertise via Wetland Centres etc. It would be interesting to hold seminars and workshops not only in the hotels but, as far as possible in Wetland Centres!
5. Estonia must clarify whether Finland is ready to chair and proactively guide NorBalWet in 2008. One interesting theme was proposed by Latvia for the 2008 conference/seminar/workshop: to discuss and compare the nature conservation administration systems (their strength and weaknesses) in initiative's countries, their tasks and activities concerning wetland conservation and management.

Additional information: during the completion of these conclusions we have received information from Jussi Soramäki and Lassi Karivalo that Finland will host the next NorBalWet seminar in 2008.

Ülle Harak

Nature Conservation Department of the Estonian Ministry of Environment

Agu Leivits and Kai Kimmel

State Nature Conservation Centre

