

Strasbourg, 8 November 2017
[files38e_2017.docx]

T-PVS/Files (2016) 38

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

36th meeting
Strasbourg, 15-18 November 2016

**Follow-up of Recommendation No. 190 (2016), on
the conservation of natural habitats and wildlife,
specially birds, in afforestation of lowland in Iceland**

- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -

*Document prepared by
the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Iceland*

N Á T T Ú R U F R Æ Ð I S T O F N U N Í S L A N D S

Iva Obretenova ,
Secretary of the Bern Convention
Head of the Biodiversity Unit
Council of Europe
F 67075 Strasbourg Cedex

Garðabær, 7. nóvember 2017
2012090013

**FOLLOW-UP OF RECOMMENDATION NO. 190 (2016), ON THE CONSERVATION
OF NATURAL HABITATS AND WILDLIFE, SPECIALLY BIRDS, IN AFFORESTATION
OF LOWLAND IN ICELAND**

Dear Iva Obretenova

As you know, the AEWA Standing Committee, at its 12th meeting, decided to adopt the same set of Recommendations as the Bern Convention did with Recommendation No. 190 (2016). On May 2nd this year the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources responded to a letter from the AEWA Standing Committee on the subject: "Implementation Review Process: plans for lowland afforestation in Iceland threatening breeding habitats of AEWA-listed water bird species – recommendations from the AEWA Standing Committee to the Government of Iceland." See attached letter/report dated May 2nd. Following the letter/report from the Ministry the AEWA Secretariat asked for some further information on the above subject, see attached letter dated 11th May 2017. The Ministry responded to the letter with an e-mail dated November 1st 2017, see attached.

The Icelandic Institute of Natural History, IINH, have at this moment nothing to add to the national report given by the Ministry for the Environment and Natural resources to AEWA. The IINH is working on several of the recommendations as described under appropriate items in the national report. This includes the Nature Conservation Register where selection of sites for protection in an ecological network of protected areas, including habitat types and important bird areas. The selection of sites will take notice of appropriate Resolutions adopted by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention. The IINH is working on a comprehensive monitoring plan for key ecological elements in Icelandic nature, including birds and habitats. The IINH have published two new basic scientific reports on Habitat Types in Iceland http://utgafa.ni.is/fjolrit/Fjolrit_54.pdf and Important Bird Areas http://utgafa.ni.is/fjolrit/Fjolrit_55.pdf both publications have abstract in English.

The work that have been described here will in one way or the other affect afforestation in lowland areas in Iceland and will contribute to follow up of Recommendation No. 190 (2016).

Yours sincerely

Trausti Baldursson
Director of Ecology and Consultancy Department



Dr Jacques Trouvilliez
UNEP/AEWA Secretariat
UN Campus
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn
Germany

UMHVERFIS-OG
AUÐLINDARÁÐUNEYTIÐ
*Ministry for the Environment
and Natural Resources*

Skuggasundi 1 101 Reykjavík Iceland
tel.: + (354) 545 8600 postur@environment.is
environment.is

Reykjavík May 2, 2017
Reference: UMH15010069/72-3
Your reference: 17-051-sd

Subject: Implementation Review Process: plans for lowland afforestation in Iceland threatening breeding habitats of AEWA-listed waterbird species – recommendations from the AEWA Standing Committee to the Government of Iceland

Dear Mr Trouvilliez

Please find below the details of how the recommendations in the joint AEWA/Bern Convention mission report will be implemented by the Icelandic Government.

In general it can be noted that multiple elements being instrumental in the conservation of waterbird species are in process by the Icelandic Government. First, the implementation of new nature conservation legislation includes the preparation of a Nature Conservation Register, which will form the basis for addition of new areas for a network of protected areas. Second, the IINH recently issued a new map of habitat types and a new report on the status and trends of bird populations is due at the end of May 2017, which can improve the knowledge base for land use planning. Third, new bills for forestry and soil conservation are pending in the Icelandic Parliament. The bill for forestry will call for the development of a national forest strategy and sets clear objectives for taking biological diversity into consideration in all forestry.

Respectfully

Björn Helgi Barkarson

Head of Division

Action plan: Implementation of recommendations in the context of the AEWA Implementation Review Process case on plans for lowland afforestation in Iceland threatening breeding habitats of AEWA-listed waterbird species.

As a follow-up to the recommendations from the AEWA Standing Committee to the Government of Iceland, the following action plan has been developed. Each point is numbered according to the Annex 1 recommendations.

Abbreviations:

- MENR – Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources
- IINH – Icelandic Institute for Natural Heritage
- IFS – Icelandic Forest Service
- NPA – National Planning Agency
- NCR – Nature Conservation Register
- NFS – National Forestry Strategy
- MII – Ministry of Industries and Innovation

Item	Action	Timeline	Responsible
1	Developing a schedule.	April 2017	MENR
2	An agreement between the Environment Ministry and IINH for a project supporting the implementation of AEWA was activated in January 2017. The agreement states that the IINH is responsible for day to day implementation of the convention in Iceland as stated in the text of the convention. The IINH is also responsible for producing the national report for the convention and that the IINH acts as the active member in committees, workgroups and projects. Also that the IINH nominates national focal points.	January 2017 and onwards	MENR
3	Development of network of protected areas continues through implementation of the new Nature Conservation Act and reformed in the NCR, for the establishment of such a network, based on a systematic assessment of habitat types, habitats and species abundance and status. According to the legislation, the first plan for implementation of new NCR sites will be put forward as parliamentary resolution in 2017. The IINH will publish a report on the current status and trends of Icelandic bird populations at the end of May that, in addition to the national bird monitoring strategy, will serve as a basis for identification of bird areas for protection. Identification and nomination of areas for inclusion in tentative list of Emerald Network sites will eventually follow.	Fall 2017 and onwards	IINH and MENR
	In the pending bill on Forestry are provisions for both a NFS		IFS and

4	<p>and regional forestry action plans. Both will be subject to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Act. Regional forestry action plans will involve close collaboration with municipalities and institutions concerned. In addition the SEA act 105/2006 already provides that forestry programs that meet the acts criteria should be subject to SEA. The IFS, collaborating with the NPA, is currently under way developing the first regional afforestation plan. This process will undergo an SEA as determined by law. Further, the planning can now be supported by the habitat type maps. This process takes time, both due to the complexity of such processes and due to the fact that Icelandic agencies are limited in staff.</p>		MENR
5	<p>The forestry sector in Iceland is going through various changes. The first step was taken in 2016 in merging the governmental bodies responsible for forestry on regional and national level into one organization, the Icelandic forest service. This has already made the development and implementation of regional afforestation plans more efficient and better coordinated. Further changes will be following the implementation of a new Forestry Act.</p>		Icelandic Parliament
6	<p>The IINH has just revised the status of most Icelandic bird species, mapped important bird areas and habitat types. In year 2017 the IINH will draft monitoring plan for bird habitats and bird species, including waterfowl. The monitoring plan will also cover habitat types in general, including the conjunction with afforestation sites. The IINH will also issue new redlist for birds and simultaneously assess the favourable conservation status of birds. As noted in item 3 the first draft of the NCR is to be prepared in year 2017 and will focus on the conservation of habitat types and important bird areas.</p>	2017	IINH
7	<p>All afforestation proposals are subject to EIA screening. There are thresholds for class B but class C is without thresholds and therefore case by case appraisal. The outcome of the screening process regarding a particular forestry project may well be that it should be subject to an EIA (class A) depending on the relevant criteria in Annex II. This process will now be better supported by the new habitat type maps.</p>	Ongoing	IFS
8	<p>Individual afforestation contracts are already carried out in this way and the newest available information from the IINH will be used when developing afforestation plans and providing guidance to land-owners.</p>	Ongoing	IFS
9	<p>Iceland is working on a climate change action plan, which can include measures to sequester carbon in soil and vegetation and the restoration of drained wetlands, taking into</p>		IINH, IFS

	consideration the conservation of biological diversity. Further formalized consultation will be included in the formulation of a NFS. In addition the NCR will contain recommendations to further develop a network of protected areas. These proposals are developed by the IINH in collaboration with a council of specialist which includes the IFS.		
10	The update of Iceland's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan is in process and is estimated to be due mid year 2018.	2018	MENR
11	Currently there is no direct funding of such research but various players are conducting related research projects, including universities. New data from the IINH give the further opportunities to strengthen research in this direction.		
12	Current bylaw for afforestation programs sets criteria for afforestation planning. New NCR and habitat type maps help municipalities and land users to protect sites that support important bird population. This can also be said about the process of regional planning for forestry.		
13	This item is currently under consideration in the reform of the support for farmers and in the development of the climate change action plan. These processes should be concluded by the end of year 2017 and are directed by the Ministry of Industries and Innovation.		



Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme

Mr. Björn Helgi Barkarson
Head of Division
Department of Land and Natural Heritage
Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources
Skuggasund 1
101 Reykjavík
Iceland

Date: 11 May 2017
Ref: 17-076-sd

Subject: Implementation Review Process: plans for lowland afforestation in Iceland threatening breeding habitats of AEWA-listed waterbird species – comments by the AEWA Standing Committee on the proposed schedule and programme of work for implementation of the recommendations

Dear Mr. Barkarson,

Thank you once again for submitting proposed schedule and programme of work (your reference: UMH15010069/72-3 of 02 May 2017) in response to our letter (our reference: 17-051-sd of 04 April 2017) submitting the recommendations by the AEWA Standing Committee to the Government of Iceland in the context of the AEWA Implementation Review Process case on plans for lowland afforestation in Iceland threatening breeding habitats of AEWA-listed waterbird species.

The proposed schedule and programme of work have been reviewed by the Standing Committee and they would like to make the following comments and request the further details and complements:

- **Recommendation 4** – while taking into account the complexity of the processes under this recommendation and the understaffing of the responsible institutions, it will be useful to provide an indicative timetable.
- **Recommendation 5** - the elements provided in the programme of work do not really provide clarity as to how the recommendation will be implemented; regional plans are not a national strategy yet. Please provide further information on what actions will be taken and by whom to develop a national indicative forestry strategy in the short term and how each of the individual sub-items (i-iv) will be incorporated. Please indicate a timeline and responsible institution(s).
- **Recommendation 9** – the programme of work provided against this recommendation does not address the issue at stake. Please review again Recommendation 9 and provide a revised set of actions. Please indicate a timeline and responsible institution(s).
- **Recommendation 11** – it is appreciated that resources are not readily available for undertaking new research in the field of afforestation impact on birds and other biodiversity, but it would be useful to provide some more information on what is already being done, as indicated. In addition, please indicate what action would be undertaken to stimulate, encourage and prioritise new research in this field and how it would be ensured that results of such research will be fully used in EIA processes. Please indicate a timeline and responsible institution(s).
- **Recommendation 12** - the elements provided in the programme of work do not really provide clarity as to how the recommendation will be implemented. Please provide further information on what actions will be taken and by whom to update and expand existing guidance on good environmental practice in afforestation

-2-

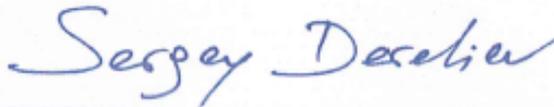
and how each of the individual sub-items (i-v) will be incorporated. Please indicate a timeline and responsible institution(s).

- **Recommendation 13** – since it is indicated that the process of introducing state-funded "positive" financial incentives for land management in favour of nature conservation is currently ongoing, please clarify what are the incentives considered and how it is ensured that they will be favouring nature conservation. Which institution is tasked with the responsibility of ensuring such incentives will be built in as part of the overall reform process led by the Ministry of Industry and Innovations?

We would appreciate if you can provide the required information at your earliest convenience and not later than the end of May 2017.

The AEWA Standing Committee also decided to ask for annual reports against the programme of work. After a consultation with the Bern Convention Secretariat it was agreed to request a submission of the first annual report at the beginning of September 2017 (deadline 08 September 2017). The timing for future annual reports will be agreed with the Bern Convention Standing Committee and you will be duly informed.

Yours sincerely,



Sergey Dereliev
Technical Officer

CC: Mr Sigurður Ármann Bránnson, Head of Division, AEWA National Focal Point for Iceland, Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources
Ms Iva Obretenova, Secretary of the Bern Convention



Re: AEWA IRP case_lowland afforestation in Iceland_recommendations from the
AEWA Standing Committee

Björn Helgi Barkarson

to:

Sergey Dereliev

01.11.2017 10:29

Cc:

jon.g.petursson, "Trausti Baldursson", Sigurður Á. Þráinsson, OBRETENOVA

Iva, Jacques Trouvilliez, Jolanta Kremer

Hide Details

From: Björn Helgi Barkarson <r14bjba@stjr.is> Sort List...

To: Sergey Dereliev <sergey.dereliev@unep-aewa.org>

Cc: jon.g.petursson@uar.is, "Trausti Baldursson" <trausti@ni.is>, Sigurður Á.

Þráinsson <sigurdur.thrainsson@uar.is>, OBRETENOVA Iva

<Iva.OBRETENOVA@coe.int>, Jacques Trouvilliez <jacques.trouvilliez@unep-

aewa.org>, Jolanta Kremer <jolanta.kremer@unep-aewa.org>

1 Attachment



17-076 IRP case Nr 4_Iceland_afforestation_StC comments on programme of work.pdf

Tilvísun í mál: UMH15010069

Dear Sergey

On behalf of the Icelandic Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources I would like to apologise for the delay of responding to your previous e-mails.

The comments from the AEWA Standing Committee have been reviewed. It is the view of the ministry, as is noted in the letter to the AEWA Secretariat dated May 2 2017, that since multiple elements being instrumental in the conservation of waterbird species are in process by the Icelandic authorities, the schedule and programme of work can only be very general regarding details and time schedule as outlined in the already delivered action plan. Most recommendations from the IRP are general in nature on Icelandic policy and institutional function, not specific for the scope of the AEWA convention. The ministry will report on the progress of the submitted schedule if requested by the AEWA Secretariat.

Best regards,

Björn

Björn Helgi Barkarson, sérfræðingur, / Head of Division
Umhverfis- og auðindaráðuneytið, skrifstofa landgæða
Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Land and Natural Heritage
Skuggasund 1, 150 Reykjavík, Iceland
Sími 545-8600, fax 562-4566 / Tel: +354-545-8600, fax +354-562-4566
www.umhverfisraduneyti.is / www.environment.is

Vinsamlegast hugið að umhverfinu áður en þið prentið
Please consider the environment before printing