

**Resolution CM/ResDip(2019)2
on the renewal of European Diploma for Protected Areas awarded to the natural reserve of
Wurzacher Ried (Germany)**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 4 September 2019
at the 1352nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)¹*

Appendix 5: Model plan for annual reports

Annual report for the year October 2023 to September 2024

Annual reports should describe the changes that have taken place since the previous year in dynamic terms of management and function and not be limited to basic data. Any new text or map introducing a change in the situation of the area should be attached to the annual report.

State: **Germany**

Name of the area: **Nature Reserve Wurzacher Ried**

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas:

European Diploma extension: Annual report for the year 2019: 5 years since renewal

Central authority concerned:

Ministry of the Environment, Climate Protection and the Energy Sector
Baden-Württemberg
Kernerplatz 9
D-70182 Stuttgart
Tel. 0049-(0)711-126-0, Fax 0049-(0)711-126-2255
e-mail: poststelle@um.bwl.de
www.um.baden-wuerttemberg.de

Authority responsible for its management:

Tübingen Regional Administrative Authority
Units 55 and 56
Konrad-Adenauer-Str. 20,
D-72072 Tübingen
Tel. 0049-(0)7071-757-0, Fax 0049-(0)7071-757-3190
e-mail: poststelle@rpt.bwl.de
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¹ As amended by Resolution CM/ResDip(2014)2 on 2 July 2014 at the 1204th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.

1. Conditions: List here all conditions which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the conditions have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the conditions. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1. By 2021, revise the 2007 management plan or draft a new management framework meeting the provisions and objectives of the European Diploma for Protected Areas and complementary to the Natura 2000 management plan in preparation;

The management plan (MaP) for the FFH and bird sanctuary "Wurzacher Ried und Rohrsee" was completed with effect from 1 November 2019. The management plan complements the 2007 maintenance and development plan (PEPL) for the nature reserve (see earlier annual reports).

2. Recommendations: List here all recommendations which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the recommendations have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the recommendations. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1. investigate the possible technical methods to connect the aquatic system of the Haidgauer high moor, separated by the trunk road B465, through water channels or other technical measures in order to enable more water flow towards the eastern part of the moor and to ensure water exchange, especially in the Randlagg;

One stipulation for receiving the European Diploma is reconnection of the two hydrological bog areas to the left and right of the B 465. Various solutions were studied as part of a feasibility study. The feasibility study was forwarded by the Tübingen Regional Administrative Authority, Unit 44, to the Ministry of Transport with the recommendation to pursue a technical solution. A decision by the Ministry has not yet been received.

A road traffic report commissioned by the Regional Administrative Authority is currently being prepared. It will investigate the composition of the traffic on the B 465.

The report will also determine whether the traffic volume is reasonably acceptable for local residents, and it will present solutions for relief measures, e.g. in the form of bypasses.

When the report is completed, the results will be passed on to the Ministry of Transport. The results will be the basis for deciding how to carry out the reconnection measures on the B 465 through the Wurzacher Ried.

2. draw up a prevention plan to manage invasive species, to be prepared in case of their appearance, according to EU Regulation 1143/2014;

For years now, the occurrence or presence of invasive species has been observed, and appropriate preventive measures have been taken to systematically combat specific species such as Canadian goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*), glandular balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*). To date it has been possible in this way to limit their further spread.

3. pursue the efforts to create an observation tower next to the peat museum to provide an additional attraction in the area without disturbing the ecosystem;

The construction of a nature observation tower will make it easier for citizens and visitors to see the fen that has a European Diploma. The tower will offer new opportunities for environmental education and provide ways to experience this extraordinary landscape. For the town of Bad Wurzach this is an important element of sustainable development in the context of health, wellness, soft tourism and culture.

A review of all locations in the fen led to the conclusion that the location at the historic Haidgau peat works is most suitable. This is an abandoned industrial site. The soil was damaged by operation of the former peat works, and the location is currently in a process of succession. The preliminary FFH studies showed that the construction of a nature observation tower at this location would not considerably disrupt valuable animal species in the fen and can be expected to conform with nature conservation.

Provisions were made for the relocation of sand lizards (*Lacerta agilis*), an FFH species, which are found at this site. Another advantage of this site is that it does not require the creation of additional infrastructure in the form of paths, supply facilities or disposal facilities.

As project owner, the town is meeting the information needs of citizens through numerous public meetings of the municipal council, information events, press releases and guided tours of the historic Haidgau peat works. The documents for the building permit application are now available. In the summer of 2024, the municipal council approved the construction project with a large majority.

At this same time, concerned citizens initiated a signature campaign to petition for a referendum. The conditions for a petition were met, and the path is now clear for a referendum. On 23 February 2025, citizens of Bad Wurzach who are entitled to vote will have a chance to vote in secret for or against the tower project. The decision will be binding and is equivalent to a resolution of the municipal council.

4. in co-operation with the aeronautical authority, stop any unnecessary acrobatic flights over the fen due to their negative impact on the site and especially birdlife;

Above the Wurzacher Ried Nature Reserve there is a flight box which was regularly used in earlier years by the Tannheim aerobatic training school. A recommendation on the extension of the European Diploma calls for permanent closure or relocation of the flight box for reasons of nature conservation. Although no flight movements have been detected above the nature reserve for several years, permanent closure of the flight box through legal means has not yet been achieved.

In response to an inquiry by the Ministry for the Environment regarding continuation of the flight box, the Deutsche Flugsicherung (DFS) replied that the flight box has not existed for a year. Regular aerobatic flights over the fen are therefore no longer possible.

The state of Baden-Württemberg is negotiating with the Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport in order to restrict the air space over the fen. This is the only way to protect the area from aerobatic disturbances on a reliable and permanent basis.

5. resume negotiations with landowners in order to acquire land in the outlying areas – mainly near the village of Albers – to limit and eventually stop the deposition of substances harmful to this sensitive environment, such as livestock effluents or chemical fertilisers. In case of inconclusive results, long-term agreements should be negotiated to reduce this;

Baden-Württemberg's property management authority has now completed acquisition of 17 hectares of hillside land near Albers. See the earlier annual reports.

In the year under review, following many years of effort, the Baden-Württemberg State Administration for Property and Building Construction completed a voluntary exchange of land with a private owner. This was lot 96/2 in Bad Wurzach-Unterschwarzach, which was merged in the same process with the state-owned lots 94/1, 96/5 and 96/8 in the fen. The exchange was accomplished by relinquishing state-owned property near Unterschwarzach, outside of the nature reserve.

6. preserve the integrity of the landscape around the basin of Bad Wurzach and avoid the construction of technical infrastructure on the hills and hilltops in the visual range of the Wurzacher Ried.

The Wurzacher Ried nature reserve has the European Diploma in Category A (area with priority for protection of European flora and fauna and their habitats). Recommendation 6 of the European Council also explicitly includes protection of the surroundings of the Wurzacher Ried (Wurzach Basin).

According to this recommendation, the Wurzach Basin should be kept free of technical infrastructure, in particular wind turbines and ground-mounted photovoltaic installations, in the visual range of the fen. For the purpose of wind power planning in the Wurzach Basin (subregional energy plan of the Regional Association of Upper Swabia / Lake Constance), the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma inquired about the status of wind power use and possible consequences for the European Diploma. The subregional energy plan was presented to the public from February to the end of April 2024.

The head of the Nature Conservation Centre reported on the plan at the spring meeting of the Group of Specialists in Strasbourg. Here are the most important results:

- The new demarcation of the Wurzach Basin (area protected by the Wurzacher Ried European Diploma), which is based primarily on geological and environmental factors, is accepted by the Group

of Specialists (Source: Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas (2024): Meeting Report 20 – 21 February 2024, Council of Europe, Strasbourg: p. 11. T-PVS/DE(2024)12).

- The Group of Specialists welcomes the fact that the Regional Association of Upper Swabia / Lake Constance has excluded the Wurzach Basin from the priority areas for wind power in the subregional energy plan.

- The Group of Specialists appreciates the study on the visibility of possible wind farms in the Wurzach Basin and adjacent areas as seen from observation points in the Wurzacher Ried.

- Hummelluckenwald, a planned location for wind turbines, is within the boundaries of the Wurzach Basin, and the planning process is not covered by the subregional energy plan (the area does not have priority for wind power). The Group of Specialists views this as a violation of Recommendation 6 and has serious concerns that the Diploma could be jeopardised. The Group of Specialists recommends offering an area outside of the Wurzach Basin to the investor.

1. Current information on the subregional energy plan

The Regional Association will evaluate the statements in the public presentation of the subregional energy plan by early 2025. Valid objections have already been received, and they will mean that some priority areas for wind energy will be reduced in size.

As a result, the subregional energy plan was amended with new boundaries. It will be presented to the public for a second time in February 2025. In spite of this second public presentation, it is assumed that the priority areas for wind turbines and ground-mounted photovoltaic systems can be limited to 2% of the total area.

With reference to the European Diploma this means that wind turbines and ground-mounted photovoltaic systems will not receive privileged treatment and that none will be built outside of the priority areas, such as the Wurzach Basin. The subregional energy plan is expected to be approved at the meeting of the Regional Association in late 2025.

2. Current information on the Hummelluckenwald project

The Ravensburg District Authority, which is responsible for approval, has held discussions with the investor on a possible abandonment of the Hummelluckenwald wind energy project. However, the investor, who is aware of the associated problems and objections, has insisted on continuing the project at this location because it has already made investments.

In the meantime the investor has filed an application for approval under emissions control legislation. The application is not yet complete, however. Some documents must still be submitted.

The Regional Association has written to the Ravensburg District Authority to express its objections to the project. The Ravensburg District Authority likewise considers the Hummelluckenwald location to be excellent in terms of landscape conservation, nature conservation and species conservation. In its view the protection of this area is of overriding public interest and takes precedence over the public interest, also justified, in the construction of wind turbines (privileged status).

There also exists a resolution of the Bad Wurzach municipal council from 2024 according to which approval should be denied to any planning in the Wurzach Basin that could jeopardise the European Diploma.

The authorities (Ministry of the Environment, Tübingen Regional Administrative Authority, Ravensburg District Authority, Regional Association of Upper Swabia / Lake Constance) are unanimous in their assessment of the Hummelluckenwald project. The participating authorities are determined to apply all of the legal means at their disposal to prevent the Hummelluckenwald project.

3. Site Management: List here any changes to the European Diploma holding site management, in relation to both terrestrial and aquatic environments (as appropriate), and in relation to staff and finances, since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

Staff:

The following people worked for the Nature Conservation Centre in the 2024 reporting year:

- Dr Siegfried Roth (Head, 100%)
- Dr Nicole Jüngling (Deputy head, Environmental Education, 60%)
- Sabrina Schiller (Environmental Education, 60%)
- Valeska Ulmer (Marketing / Public relations, 50%)
- Regina Kuhn (Secretariat, 60%)
- Belinda Tosun (Secretariat, 50%)

Financing

The Nature Conservation Centre is financed from subsidies granted to the centre's sponsors as well as from the income generated by the centre itself. The ongoing operating costs of the Nature Conservation Centre are borne pro rata by the donors of the Centre (State of Baden-Württemberg, District of Ravensburg, town of Bad Wurzach).

On the basis of the figures up to the end of September 2024, a good economic result can be expected in this year, due to the good number of visitors to our events and the Moor Extrem exhibition, but also due to the good sales in the shop. On the cost side, high building-related costs (especially energy and data processing) are having an impact. There were also unforeseen investments for lighting of the stations and video projectors in the Moor Extrem exhibition. The budget result for 2024 cannot yet be estimated.

Landscape management

The marshes between Haasen and Kimpfler are in a process of succession on account of disuse and are therefore losing their value for nature conservation. In a landscape management project carried out near Kimpfler in January 2024 by the Landscape Conservation Association and the Nature Conservation Centre, trees and shrubs were removed in an area of approximately 0.5 hectares. The area is now open again.

In winter 23/24, several areas along the edge of the woods and parallel to the cycle path (west of the glass factory) that were in succession were cleared of bushes and partially mulched. The aim of these measures is to create richly structured forest edges with an ecotone function, optimise the biotope network and establish stepping stone biotopes at the southern edge of the area.

In winter 23/24, initial maintenance of abandoned hay meadows and transitional moorland along the Wurzacher Ach northeast of the peat works was carried out as part of the Natura 2000 management plan.

Agreements will be reached with numerous farmers for the maintenance of the reed beds in the peripheral areas of the fen. Throughout the reporting year, 13 contractors maintained a total of 91 hectares of wet and hay meadows in line with Baden-Württemberg's Landscape Maintenance Ordinance. 25 contractors maintained a total of 158 hectares under contracts of use.

Wet and hay meadows, which are inaccessible to agricultural machinery, are mowed with the State Forest Administration's slope mower. There are around 20 hectares of mowed area.

Visitor guidance and path construction

Wooden walkways have to be repaired or renewed at irregular intervals. In summer 2024, the defective wooden walkway in the Lower Ried, which runs from the drainage channel to the first viewing platform along a distance of approximately 150 metres, was completely renewed by the public works department and equipped with plastic planks.

In summer 2024, gravel was spread on the path in the Lower Ried from the spa park along the drainage channel up to the first bridge over the channel (200 m).

Documentation of flora and fauna

The avifauna in the nature reserve was again mapped in the reporting year, following surveys in 2008 and 2016. The mapping was carried out from winter 2023/2024 to autumn/winter 2024 by 20 volunteer ornithologists from the District of Ravensburg. Breeding birds, passage migrants and winter guests were recorded. Listening boxes were used to monitor twilight-active and nocturnally active species.

Without elaborating on the current mapping results, it can already be stated that the fen is important for the avifauna of the entire region. The species include crane (*Grus grus*), corncrake (*Crex crex*), spotted crane (*Porzana porzana*), meadow pipit (*Anthus pratensis*), common snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) and black stork (*Ciconia nigra*).

One notable observation in 2024 was the arrival of as many as five snake eagles (*Circaetus gallicus*) between May and August. This species is common in southern Europe, but north of the Alps it has been seen only irregularly in the summer.

Northern lapwing protection project

The northern lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) is threatened with extinction in Baden-Württemberg. Only about 300-400 pairs are still breeding. The Wurzacher Ried is an important habitat for this species.

In 2024 a northern lapwing protection project was initiated. During the year there were an estimated 12 breeding pairs in the Wurzacher Ried area. A drone with state-of-the-art thermal imaging technology was able to pinpoint six nests.

In order to protect the nests from large nest robbers like foxes, all of them were covered by a wire basket measuring about 130 cm in diameter. The baskets were provided by the Tübingen Regional Administrative Authority. Three were made by the Bad Wurzach public works department.

Moor frog project

The District of Ravensburg marks the southwestern range limit of the moor frog (*Rana arvalis*), where it is highly endangered. One of three remaining populations of moor frogs in the District of Ravensburg can be found in the Wurzacher Ried.

In recent years the Ravensburg Landscape Conservation Association and the Nature Conservation Centre have upgraded the spawning habitats of the moor frog and released juvenile frogs that had been raised in artificial ponds. Visitors to the fen will have a chance to learn more about this rare frog species. In 2024/25 a digital nature trail with 9-10 stations is planned to be built along the cycle path from Bad Wurzach to Dietmanns and past the areas in the fen where moor frogs were last reported.

4. Boundaries: Give details of any changes to the boundaries of the European Diploma holding site since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. If there are any changes, please attach an appropriate map to this report. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

There were no changes in the boundaries of the protected area in the reporting year.

5. Other information: List here any other information about the European Diploma holding site which you consider should be provided to the Council of Europe.

Infomobile for the Nature Conservation Centre

In May 2023 a bicycle infomobile was brought to the Nature Conservation Centre to promote environmental education. The infomobile consists of an e-bike and a trailer equipped with a variety of educational media. It is financed by the LBBW foundation.

Environmental education employees provide support. The infomobile is deployed at various locations in the fen. It can be set up in a few simple steps. The attractions include a stuffed beaver, other zoological specimens to touch and feel, a field glass for surveying the surroundings, binoculars for viewing details and various kinds of information material.