

**Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1
on the revised regulations for the European Diploma for Protected Areas**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 February 2008
at the 1018th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)¹*

Appendix 5: Model plan for annual reports

Annual report for the year October 2020 until September 2021

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: **Wurzacher Ried (Fen) Nature Reserve**

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: 2 years since renewal

Central authority concerned:

Ministry of the Environment, Climate Protection and the Energy Sector
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Authority responsible for its management:

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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.
Internet : <http://www.coe.int/cm>

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. This management plan presents the occurrences of the habitat types and species of the Habitats Directive on a plot-by-plot basis and specifies the objectives and measures that must be taken to conserve and develop these protected areas of Community interest.

The management plan complements the 2007 maintenance and development plan for the nature reserve. Nature conservation measures in the Wurzacher Ried Nature Reserve can now be better targeted at safeguarding and developing habitat types and species of Community interest.

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.

The section of the B 465 trunk road that runs through the Wurzacher Ried was ranked number 5 in the list of the most important re-networking sections in the “State concept for re-networking roads in Baden-Württemberg” of the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Transport in 2015. Against this background, the Regional Administrative Authority Tübingen, Unit 44 [Road Planning] in technical coordination with Unit 56 [Nature Conservation and Landscape Management], commissioned a feasibility study to examine possible nature conservation improvements on this road section. In recent years, a wide variety of surveys and site investigations have been carried out to this end and relevant technical solutions have been examined. The final feasibility study with corresponding technical solution options has meanwhile been completed and forwarded to the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Transport to examine the subsequent course to be taken.

The Regional Administrative Authority Tübingen commissioned a traffic study via the Ministry of Transport to obtain reliable facts for all the various options. The aim was to clarify whether by passing the fen and demolishing the trunk road through it might be an option. The report is due in spring 2022. The Ministry of Transport will reach a decision based on the facts that will then be available.

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 a view tower next to the Torfmuseum to provide an additional attraction in the area without disturbance of the ecosystem.

The planned tower next to the Torfmuseum will provide numerous opportunities for regional development, visitor guidance and environmental education. The municipal administration of Bad

Wurzach adopted a fundamental planning resolution on 15 June 2020 and the town council opted for one of the submitted drafts on 19 October 2020. The town of Bad Wurzach's contribution towards the funding of the tower was secured by selling public land in the nature reserve to the State of Baden-Württemberg.

The construction of the tower requires an exemption from the Protected Area Ordinance. The necessary Habitats Directive impact assessment and study of the influence of the project on the conservation purpose of the nature reserve are currently being carried out and alternative locations in the area are being examined.

The necessary building-related studies (subsoil testing, fire prevention concept, visitor guidance concept) are also currently being prepared by the town as project owner.

Exemption from the Protected Area Ordinance will be forthcoming provided planning does not raise any conflicting nature conservation issues or concerns. The project will be implemented after the studies and the approval procedures have been completed.

4. In cooperation with the aeronautical authority, stop any unnecessary acrobatic flights over the Ried with negative impacts on the site and especially the birdlife.

The responsible nature conservation authority, the Regional Administrative Authority Tübingen, wishes to end flights over the fen arguing that they are not compatible with the objectives of Natura 2000 (protection of breeding birds, noise). The Tannheim aerobatic training school must obtain an exemption from the Protected Area Ordinance from the Regional Administrative Authority Tübingen if it intends to continue using the flight zone. As, for the reasons mentioned, such an exemption will not be granted, it is not at present clear whether aerobatic flyers intend to continue using the flight zone.

The Ministry for the Environment has written to the Deutsche Flugsicherung (aeronautical authority for flight zones) and, referring to the undisputed legal position with regard to nature conservation, has requested that the authority do its part to end aerobatic flights. No reply has yet been received from the Deutsche Flugsicherung.

5. Resume negotiations with landowners in order to acquire land in the outlying areas – mainly near the village of Albers – to limit and further stop the deposition of substances harmful to the sensitive environment. In case of inconclusive results, long-term agreements should be negotiated to reduce depositions.

In order to protect the climate, the State of Baden-Württemberg is increasingly investing in the acquisition of climate-relevant land. In the year under review, the Baden-Württemberg State Administration for Property and Building Construction acquired around 56 hectares of land in the Wurzacher Ried Nature Reserve through the Ravensburg office. The land was sold by the town of Bad Wurzach, which is using the proceeds from the sale to fund the town's financial contribution towards the tower project.

The State's property management authority has now completed acquisition of 17 hectares of hillside land near Albers. The transfer of the slopes to the ownership of the State represents a positive conclusion of its long-term efforts to take over these peripheral areas, which are important for the nature reserve. This will enable these areas (which are currently being intensively used) to be managed in line with nature conservation requirements, thus achieving a significant improvement in the preservation and promotion of fen habitats and species of particular importance to nature conservation.

The exchange of approximately 6 hectares of privately-owned farmland on the western edge of the nature reserve has also been completed. The nature conservation objective is the conversion of the arable land into grassland and its subsequent extensive use.

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 responsible authorities examine the impact of all building developments in the area on the visual integrity of the Wurzacher Basin and take this into account in all their decisions. As there are plans to increase the number of ground-mounted solar PV systems in the region, the Baden-Württemberg Ministry for the Environment, the Regional Administrative Authority Tübingen, the Ravensburg District Authority and the town of Bad Wurzach have assembled a catalogue of criteria that elaborates the conditions that apply in this area. Amongst other things, these conditions stipulate that, as a rule, such systems should only be approved in exceptional cases and should not be planned in protected areas or where they would have significant effects on such areas. The size and capacity of such systems are also restricted to a maximum of 750 MW and are only possible at a distance of 1000 metres from the defined core zone (moorland) of the Wurzacher Ried. The height of systems is limited to 3 metres and they must be suitably greened in the visual range from the planned observation tower. Higher structures should be avoided in order to protect the relevant bird species at the site.

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

Horst Weisser retired as manager of the Nature Conservation Centre on 31 August 2021 after 36 years in this position. His successor, Dr. Siegfried Roth, assumed the management of the Nature Conservation Centre on 1 September 2021, following a 2-month overlap and induction period.

Travel restrictions introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in a high volume of visitors to the Wurzacher Ried and growing difficulties guiding visitors and ensuring compliance with the Protected Area Ordinance. The Ministry for the Environment is therefore in the process of assessing whether the Regional Administrative Authority Tübingen, for example, can employ so-called summer rangers in the summer half-year of 2022 for deployment in sensitive, locally managed protected areas, such as the Wurzacher Ried. Their task would be to control access to the protected areas, to inform visitors about how to behave appropriately with regard to nature conservation and to coordinate visitor guidance.

Maintenance and development measures

All maintenance and development measures are performed in accordance with the FFH Management Plan, the Maintenance and Development Plan for the nature reserve and specialist concepts developed by the nature conservation authority of the State of Baden-Württemberg. All measures taken in the Wurzacher Ried take general account of and are designed to conserve the protected areas of Community interest (habitat types and species in the Habitats Directive; bird species in the bird sanctuary) and to improve conservation conditions at the area level. As well as primary fen habitats (high moor, intermediate bog and bog forest), work was also stepped up during the reporting period on improving and in places creating new and especially species-rich, secondary fen biotopes (calcareous fens, hay meadows, species-rich wet meadows) and on developing extensive grasslands on the periphery of the Wurzacher Ried. This involved removing around 4 hectares of plant succession, preparing areas for future hay mowing and sowing native seeds on 7.4 hectares to establish species-rich grassland on previously intensively used areas (arable land; fat meadows).

In the reporting period, agreements were also reached with numerous farmers for the maintenance of the reed beds in the peripheral areas of the fen. Throughout the reporting year, 25 contractors maintained a total of 137 hectares of wet and hay meadows in line with Baden-Württemberg's Landscape Maintenance Ordinance. 25 contractors maintained a total of 157 hectares under contracts of use.

Wet and hay meadows which are inaccessible to agricultural machinery are mowed with the State Forest Administration's mowing caterpillar. In the reporting year there were around 20 hectares of mowed area.

Visitor guidance and path conception

In March, an illegal path was blocked off that followed the former and now closed loop trail around the reed lake. To the east and west of the lake, path entrances were blocked or made impassable using wooden barriers and branch material. Barriers on the western bank that had been destroyed were repaired in April.

Regular maintenance work is carried out on various path sections, especially wooden walkways, in cooperation with the State Forestry Office, the municipal construction works department and the Bad Wurzach local heritage society. Wet weather in 2021 generally led to high water levels in the fen, with the result that some sections of hiking paths in the fen were overtopped for longer periods of time and were at times impassable for visitors. As beavers also contribute to high water levels in the fen, it may be necessary in the medium term to elevate some path sections or to convert them to wooden walkways.

Documentation of flora and fauna

At just under 10 families, the beaver population in the fen remains stable and, with the exception of the intact high moor core, is spread all round the fen. In the Haidgau headwater area, two beaver dams led to the overtopping of a Schoenus fen with its colony of yellow marsh orchids (*Dactylorhiza ochroleuca*). In order to protect these species, pipes were installed in both dams so that the water level in the Scheonetum could be restored to normal.

Notable breeding birds in the reporting year:

Common crane (*Grus grus*), black stork (*Ciconia nigra*), black-crowned night heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), Eurasian teal (*Anas crecca*), spotted crake (*Porzana porzana*) and cornrake (*Crex crex*). Since 2019, at least one golden jackal (*Canis aureus*) has been present in Wurzacher Ried. The species, which is currently spreading in Europe, has established itself here for the first time in Germany and is being scientifically monitored by the FVA (Forest Research Institute Baden-Württemberg).

Nature Conservation Centre Wurzacher Ried

The Nature Conservation Centre in Bad Wurzach is the main facility that manages the local care of the Wurzach Ried, coordinates maintenance measures, engages in public relations and (in particular) provides information to visitors. The centrepiece of the centre is the innovatively designed permanent exhibition "MOOR EXTREM", which continues to enjoy great success and is an important element in the educational work carried out by the Nature Conservation Centre.

The environmental education work and nature education projects carried out by the Nature Conservation Centre suffered from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic during the reporting period. The exhibition could only be re-opened and educational events offered again in mid May of 2021. The restricted opening hours and the limited feasibility of events resulted in fewer visitors and lower revenues.

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.

Public relations

The large signs providing information about the Wurzacher Ried European Diploma on the B 465 through the fen are heavily weathered and have been taken down for renewal and updating. Both signs will be returned and attached to the existing brackets along the road in spring 2022 after they have been repaired.

Moor frog project

The District of Ravensburg marks the southwestern limit of distribution of the moor frog, 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; this is probably one of the last occurrences of this species in the southern German Alpine foothills.

The Landscape Conservation Association Ravensburg (LEV RV) has drawn up a protection concept for this species as part of the District's biodiversity strategy, for which an application for funding has been submitted via LIFE. If this application is accepted, the Nature Conservation Centre Wurzacher Ried will support this project as a committed cooperation partner.

Upper Swabia/Württemberg Allgäu Biosphere Reserve

The coalition agreement of the new State Government includes plans to initiate a third biosphere reserve in the State of Baden-Württemberg in the Upper Swabia/Württemberg Allgäu region.

The wetlands, and particularly the fens in the region, could prove to be unique features of this new planned biosphere reserve. Regardless of the outcome of these plans, the largely drained and highly damaged fens will be re-wetted to restore their CO₂ sink function and developed as hotspots of biodiversity.

Dates relevant to the European Diploma and the protected area

In 2021, a number of visits were made by political representatives and relevant decision-makers to the town of Bad Wurzach and the Wurzacher Ried. The award of the European Diploma was significant in each case. The State Secretary of the Ministry of Finance of the State of Baden-Württemberg, Gisela Splett, visited Wurzacher Ried on 8 October 2021 with her colleague from the Ministry of the Environment, Dr. Andre Baumann. They inspected the protected area and the land acquired in the reporting period by the State of Baden-Württemberg to protect the fen. The President of the Regional Administrative Authority, Klaus Tappeser, visited the town of Bad Wurzach on 26 October 2021.