

**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 Oktober 2021 to September 2022

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: 3 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 :

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 Special Area of Conservation "Wurzacher Ried und Rohrsee" according to the Habitats Directive and for the Special Protection Area "Wurzacher Ried" according to the Birds Directive was completed with effect from 1 November 2019. This management plan describes the habitat types and species of the Habitats Directive as well as the species of the Birds Directive on a plot-by-plot basis and specifies the conservation 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 (PEPL) for the nature reserve. Measures to improve the fen habitats in the Wurzacher Ried are being continuously implemented based on recommendations in the MaP and the PEPL, as well as expert recommendations made by the implementers of the species protection programme and in line with identified opportunities for habitat optimisation. In 2021/2022, for example, tailored landscape conservation management measures were carried out on > 5 ha and fen habitats were optimised. As well as reducing shrub succession, contractual nature conservation measures, in particular straw-meadow mowing, will also be carried out there in future.

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 nature conservation objective is to reconnect the two hydrological bog areas to the east and west of the B 465 road and to eliminate the barrier effect for selected target species. Within the framework of a feasibility study, various technical solutions (raising the road on pillars, green bridge) as well as the option of dismantling the road and redirecting the traffic around the moor were examined. The feasibility study was carried out by the Tübingen Regional Administrative Authority, Unit 44 [Road Planning] and in technical consultation with Unit 56 [Nature Conservation and Landscape Management], forwarded to the Ministry of Transport with the recommendation to pursue a technical solution.

A traffic report commissioned by the Regional Administrative Authority via the Ministry of Transport has recently been made available to the responsible traffic departments. The task was to investigate the composition of the traffic on the B 465. The traffic figures should provide insights into a possible traffic solution for regional and through traffic during the period in which construction measures are being implemented. The results should also be used to assess the option of dismantling the federal road through the Ried. The available data (feasibility study, traffic report) will be used by the responsible Ministry of Transport to reach further decisions on possible measures and to initiate further steps.

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 alien 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. Further invasive species are not currently expected to appear.

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 view tower in the Wurzacher Ried offers numerous opportunities for observation and environmental education, especially to make the peat bog as well as the restoration measures visible to the public. The planning process and the construction will be carried out by the municipality of Bad Wurzach with the support of the Ravensburg District Office. Planning is focused on the site near the former Haidgau peat works, as this is the most suitable place for achieving the intended objectives, the site is already polluted by former industrial use. In parallel, alternative sites are being studied for their suitability as locations and for nature conservation. The documents required for the permit procedure are currently being compiled or prepared.

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 Tannheim aerobatic training school uses a so-called "flight box" above the Wurzacher Ried nature reserve for aerobatics exercises. The aim is to permanently decommission this flight box for nature conservation reasons or to relocate it outside the area. The Regional Administrative Authority would like to permanently ban flight operations by arguing that such flights do not comply with the objectives of the nature reserve and Natura 2000 (protection of breeding birds, noise).

In the year under review, no flight movements were detected in the nature reserve. The current suspension of the flight box could be related to the fact that aerobatic pilots do not want to become the target of critical popular sentiment if they use the flight box as well as the fact that there is no prospect of success for an application for exemption from the protected area ordinance. Nevertheless, the aim is to secure closure of the flight box by legal means. This is mainly because use of the flight box impairs the protected areas and because of the related presumed violations of legal provisions under the nature conservation laws of Baden-Württemberg and Germany.

The Ministry of the Environment has written to the Deutsche Flugsicherung (DFS) and the Federal Ministry of Transport to point out the legal situation and to request that both authorities do their part to end aerobatic flights. Response letters from both institutions are still pending.

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 the year under review, no further land acquisitions were made in the nature reserve by the public sector.

Baden-Württemberg's real estate authority has now completed acquisition of 17 hectares of hillside land near Albers. The transfer of the slopes to the ownership of the State of Baden-Württemberg represents a positive conclusion of its long-term efforts to take over these peripheral areas, which are important for the nature reserve.

Landsiedlung Baden-Württemberg GmbH (Land Settlement Society) is currently implementing compensation measures on these slopes with the objective of "developing species-rich extensively farmed grassland in the Wurzacher Ried nature reserve". The previously intensively used meadows are currently in the restoration phase for the next 3-5 years. This is to be achieved by mowing three to four times a year without fertilisation. Thereafter meadows will be mowed one or two times a year leaving rotating strips of old grass. The steep slopes are extensively grazed by cattle.

Due to constructive discussions with the Landsiedlung the slope areas near Albers will be managed in line with nature conservation objectives in the future.

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.

It has so far been possible to prevent technical infrastructure that would have a visual impact on the Wurzacher Ried due to criteria developed jointly by the Ministry of the Environment of Baden-Württemberg, the Tübingen Regional Administrative Authority, the Ravensburg District Office and the town of Bad Wurzach. Up to now no such projects have been implemented during the reporting period. Nevertheless, the expansion of renewable forms of energy presents a challenge, as a forest owner has expressed interest in erecting several wind turbines, some 200 m high, on the southern morainic hills of the Wurzach Basin (Hummelluckenwald). As there are no other objective reasons for refusal, it will be necessary to clarify whether the construction of this infrastructure is in accordance with Condition 6 of the Resolution.

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

In the aftermath of the pandemic, the Wurzacher Ried is still visited by many people. This often leads to visitor guidance problems and problems with regard to compliance with the Protected Area Ordinance.

Maintenance and development measures

All maintenance and development measures are performed in accordance with the above mentioned management plan (MaP), the maintenance and development plan for the nature reserve and special concepts developed by the nature conservation authority of the State of Baden-Württemberg. All conservation measures taken in the Wurzacher Ried are focused on the conservation and further development of the habitat types and species according to the Habitats Directive resp. the Birds Directive. Two major maintenance measures were carried out in the nature reserve during the reporting period.

In autumn 2021, initial maintenance was carried out by the Tübingen Regional Administrative Authority below the Haidgau spring lakes near Haasen by removing bushes from a former straw meadow covering an area of approx. 1 hectare. The nature conservation objective is to restore an open fen landscape and, in the medium-term, to reactivate the former straw meadow.

In autumn/winter 2022/23 it is foreseen to remove shrubs, bushes and trees in the Riedhalde southwest of Albers on about 2.7 hectares.

The aim is for the fen and transition mire areas, which have become overgrown with shrubs, to be restored to open fen habitats in order to preserve the typical fen vegetation and habitats with their special and rare fauna and flora. The measure serves to restore the habitat types "Transition mires and quaking bogs", "Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae*" and "Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-siltladen soils (*Molinion caeruleae*)" according to the Habitats Directive.

Agreements were made 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 134 hectares of wet and straw meadows in line with Baden-Württemberg's Landscape Maintenance Ordinance. Twenty-five contractors maintained a total of 157 hectares under contracts of use.

Wet and straw meadows, which are inaccessible to agricultural machinery, are mowed with the slope mower of the State Forest Service. In the reporting year there were around 20 hectares of mowed area.

Visitor guidance and path conception

Maintenance work on hiking paths includes regular work on various path sections, especially wooden walkways, in cooperation with the State Forestry Service, the public works department and the Bad Wurzach local heritage society.

More and more reports of broken walkways are being received from visitors to the fen. As these places are potential spots of danger, these defects are removed immediately by the Bad Wurzach maintenance department.

There is a high density of beaver territories in the fen and so beaver activities repeatedly lead to flooded paths and to changes of water levels which are necessary for the conservation of priority species and habitats in the fen. When this is the case, a beaver dam is regularly lowered to that level which is tolerable for the species. This ensures conservation of the protected assets affected by beaver activity and the beaver itself.

In 2022, the Bad Wurzach maintenance department resurfaced the eastern part of hiking trail 1 (circular trail near the Haidgau spring lakes) with wood chips as part of its visitor guidance measures. This makes it possible for visitors to walk the reedbed again without getting wet.

Documentation of flora and fauna

The Wurzacher Ried nature reserve is one of the largest moorland areas in Baden-Württemberg and a biodiversity hotspot. Many rare animal and plant species have higher population densities in the Wurzacher Ried than anywhere else in Baden-Württemberg and the fen is thus essential for the population of these species.

The fen is also an important habitat for the crane, which now repeatedly breeds in the fen. The Wurzacher Ried is still the only breeding site of this species in Baden-Württemberg. It has been breeding here for six years and regularly raises one or two young birds. The rare black stork also regularly breeds in the fen. In 2022, one pair was able to raise four young birds. The fen is an important breeding habitat for many other bird species and other animal species in Baden-Württemberg.

In May 2020, the first traces of a golden jackal (*Canis aureus*) were found in the Wurzacher Ried. Interesting insights into the animal's behaviours have been gained via numerous wildlife cameras, which are maintained and read out on site by the NAC. The golden jackal was not seen in the fen in 2022 and probably no longer uses the fen as its habitat. The reasons of the departure are not known, maybe it has been killed in a road accident. Monitoring of the golden jackal has therefore been discontinued.

Nature conservation centre Wurzacher Ried

The nature conservation centre is financed from regular subsidies granted to the centre's sponsors as well as from the income generated by the centre itself. The running costs of the nature conservation centre are paid proportionately by the State of Baden-Württemberg, the District of Ravensburg and the town of Bad Wurzach.

The financial calculation was based on a "normal" year; however it was not a normal year. The Corona pandemic, which was still present in the winter/spring of 2022, led to a drop in the number of guests visiting the exhibition, the nature conservation centre shop and events. The profits for 2022 are also likely to be affected by the war in Ukraine and its effects (including energy costs).

The pandemic and cost increases have more or less had an impact on the educational work at the nature conservation centre. However, the nature conservation and landscape management measures in the nature reserve have not been affected.

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

There are two road signs at the entrances to the fen along the B 465 through the Wurzacher Ried that indicate that the Wurzacher Ried has been awarded the European Diploma. The old signs are showing the effects of weathering and were redesigned and updated in the course of the renewal work on behalf of the Tübingen Regional Administrative Authority. The new signs were handed over and installed at their designated locations at the beginning of August in the presence of State Secretary for the Environment Andre Baumann, Member of Parliament Petra Krebs and representatives of the Regional Administrative Authority and the town of Bad Wurzach. In his speech, State Secretary Baumann acknowledged the ecological importance of the Wurzacher Ried. In the context of climate change protection, intact bog habitats such as the Wurzacher Ried act as important carbon sinks.

Dates relevant to the European Diploma and the protected area

In 2022, 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 two members of the Baden-Württemberg Parliament Petra Krebs and Raimund Haser also visited moors in the District of Ravensburg as part of their summer tours. The destination of Mr Haser's summer tour was the Wurzacher Ried, where he took the peat train into the fen and then walked around the rewetting area. Topics discussed included the nature conservation centre's peatland protection activities, the tower construction project and the State of Baden Württemberg's peatland protection policy.

The destination of Ms Krebs' tour was the Steinacher Ried near Bad Waldsee. A moorland guide and the nature conservation centre manager led tours to selected parts of the fen and provided information about the fen and its habitats, peatland protection and the planned Biosphere Reserve in the Upper Swabia/Allgäu region.