

**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 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: The Netherlands

Name of the area: **Weerribben-Wieden National Park**

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

Award in: 1995 Latest renewal 2021, number of years since renewal: 2

Central authority concerned:

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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. The development and use of Lelystad Airport should not jeopardise any of the Natura 2000 targets or the quality of the Weerribben-Wieden National Park;

In the past year, the government has continued to work on the Response Letter, which responds to the views submitted and the advice of the EIA Committee on the EIA plan and the appropriate assessment in outline.

The Cabinet needs more time to take a final decision.

For the Cabinet, the possible opening of Lelystad Airport for holiday flights should contribute to a strong network of worldwide destinations at Schiphol. Before the opening, a solution must have been found for the low-flying routes. And Lelystad Airport should have a nature permit. This will take some time and is still very uncertain given the current developments around excessive nitrogen emissions in the Netherlands. The Cabinet will therefore not take a decision on the opening of Lelystad Airport until the summer of 2024.

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. continue to monitor the effects of the connection between De Weerribben and De Wieden on mammals and invertebrates, paying particular attention to lighting conditions, vegetation continuity and water quality;

In 2021, vegetation and breeding birds were monitored on the north side of the Muggenbeet.

There have been observations that indicate the settlement of raccoon dogs in De Weerribben and De Wieden. Staatsbosbeheer is pursuing a zero population policy because of the negative impact of this exotic species on the fauna, in particular birds, amphibians, and reptiles. The otter has a stable population of around 40 animals in De Weerribben. Changes in the monitoring method (no more DNA analysis of excrements) will make it more difficult in the future to follow the population in terms of structure and number. The number of road casualties in De Weerribben is low, in 2021 only one. The municipality of Steenwijkerland has realised 2 new fauna facilities for otters, among others. As a result, there are now only a few infrastructural bottlenecks for the otter and other small fauna in and around De Weerribben.

2. design and implement a management plan for fish stocks covering all species and continue monitoring their development, with a particular emphasis on eels, to strengthen the ecological function of the reserves and natural reproduction in line with Natura 2000 requirements;

Due to the need for a new chairman, few meetings have taken place and the fish management plan for the larger area is not yet ready. Hopefully this will be picked up and completed in 2023.

3. monitor the trends in boating activity and their impact on fauna; consider limiting the size and number of boats during peak periods;

A zoning map will again be added to the next Natura 2000 management plan(2nd period). This first requires an investigation that measures the crowds.

4. continue with the designation of adjoining areas as extensions of, or buffer zones to, the protected areas, especially to the north (Rottige Meente) and south-east (Staphorster Veld), and create a connection between the two separate parts of De Wieden Nature Reserve between the Zuideindiger Wiede and the Bovenwiede;

The plans for the buffer zone between the Weerribben and Rottige Meenthe are being further developed by the Province of Overijssel. In addition to the development plan, the possibility is also being investigated as to whether the municipality of Steenwijkerland can construct a bypass around the village of Ossenzijl. Is still on going.

About the connection between the two separate parts of De Wieden: We thought the leases would end at the end of 2021, but this turned out to be the end of 2022. The old tenants did not answer the question as to whether they wanted to lease again and so we are currently in conversation with potential tenants.

Last year a soil survey and a flora mapping took place. With the results we will apply for the right management for the whinchat and the Corncrake.

5. continue with the renovation works at the Weerribben visitors' centre in Ossenzijl and raise the attractiveness of both this and the De Wieden visitors' centre to foreign visitors by introducing texts in English, at least, and preferably also in German and French, at all exhibitions;

Staatsbosbeheer and the municipality of Steenwijkerland will continue to develop a European Wetland Centre. This process is ongoing and will be further developed in 2023. The European Wetland Centre is in line with the recreation and tourism vision and the strategic mobility vision to spread visitors more and to encourage visiting the area in a sustainable way.

De Weerribben-Wieden National Park website is very extensive and also contains English and German versions. In addition, information boards in English and German have been placed this year in several villages in and around the National Park. In the spring, a magazine was published by the National Park for visitors and residents.

During various exhibitions this year, English text was used in addition to the Dutch texts in the Holken lake area near the visitor centre of De Wieden.

6. anticipating the decision of Dutch authorities to adopt a new definition of national parks, ensure that the National Park Weerribben-Wieden complies with the new criteria for national parks and continues to benefit from this designation;

One of the criteria from the National Parks Guideline is the preparation of a landscape biography and landscape ecological system analysis. This year, we started an objective study that maps the landscape and its human use, the ecological value and natural processes. In 2023, the landscape biography will be available to all residents, entrepreneurs and interested parties.

Students' commitments for the future of the National Park

A major issue at the moment is the future integral use of land. Not only in De Weerribben-Wieden National Park, but throughout the Netherlands. How do we ensure a good balance between nature (ecology), economy, and quality of life? As a pioneer, De Weerribben-Wieden National Park wants to be at the forefront of answering these questions. That is why De Weerribben-Wieden National Park is a testing ground for education and research. This means that issues that play a role in the National Park are investigated and answered by students. Students often look at the area with a fresh perspective and come up with innovative solutions.

7. avoid any use of burning practices when managing reed lands whenever an alternative, equally effective, management approach is available and compatible with management goals;

Burning is still happening in De Weerribben, albeit much less than before. The (summer) clippings from the hayfields are increasingly being removed and disposed of as soil improver to farmers in the area. Unfortunately, the fee for managing the disposal is very minimal. Staatsbosbeheer. and Natuurmonumenten are looking together for new sales opportunities.

This year, small trials were carried out in De Weerribben to convert reed waste into building material such as hard-pressed reed boards and insulation boards. All of this will be further tested in the coming years. In 2023, a study will be started into the effect of the burned sites on the Large copper population. The burned sites are also the locations where many nectar plants grow that the Large copper uses.

There will never again be burning in De Wieden during the summer season. Burning reed waste only takes place during the winter with reed cutting. The best thing would be if the reed waste could be processed into a product, like the reed itself. So far, studies have shown that the production costs for such products will be much higher than the revenues

8. give more visibility to the European Diploma logo and raise awareness about its aims and objectives on the website of the National Park Weerribben-Wieden, through social media or information panels in visitors' centres.

We are very proud of our European Diploma and mention this every year in various internal and external reports. In the management cycle (internal quality assessments), the European Diploma is mentioned in the Nature vision and also in all quality assessments. The renewed information boards in De Weerribben explain what the European diploma entails and show its logo. Reference to the European Diploma is also made via

the Visit Weerribben-Wieden website, <https://en.visitweerribbenwieden.com/weerribben-wieden-national-park.com/weerribben-wieden-national-park>.

The European diploma is mentioned in various reports from 2022 and is also often referenced in studies.

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.

The work organisation of the National Park has made a very active start with the preparation and implementation of various projects to be carried out with the various partners in the coming years. Answer 6 lists some of these.

At the beginning of this year, a new general manager, Pim van der Felz, started at Natuurmonumenten. He places a high priority on work safety and he believes that movement is an important component, so that more capacity is created for nature and nature management. These two issues are taken very seriously at Natuurmonumenten.

In February, the head office of Natuurmonumenten moved from 's-Graveland to Amersfoort.

There has been a change in the Staatsbosbeheer Weerribben Management Team: R. Achter de Molen has been the Area Manager since October of this year. Also, we have appointed a new Management Warden (H. Slot) and a Warden (Special Investigating Officer-BOA) for surveillance and enforcement (Chris Knol).

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.

Within the boundaries of De Wieden, the property of Natuurmonumenten, small plots have been purchased. These stand as missing links and are often 75% enclosed by properties belonging to Natuurmonumenten. This year it concerns about 5 to 10 hectares.

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.

In June, the government presented a nitrogen map, together with the policy to reduce nitrogen deposition. This caused considerable opposition and fierce discussions were held. It is now up to the provinces to present a plan within a year on how they will do this within the provincial boundaries. Natuurmonumenten supports the government's nitrogen targets, but also sees tenants (farmers) who do good for nature getting into difficulties. It will be an uncertain time for them and Natuurmonumenten will support them where necessary.

Nitrogen deposition: the Dutch government has announced plans to reduce ammonia emissions from livestock farms around N2000 areas. The aim is to reduce emissions by around 50% in a zone of 2 km by buying out or extending impact reduction measures on livestock farms. Technical solutions that reduce NH₃ emissions will also be used.

A number of farmers in the Baarlingerpolder on the southwest side of the Weerribben want to start a pilot together with the National Park and Staatsbosbeheer to investigate how they can contribute to this. The purpose of this project is to formulate an answer to the following question: How can the agricultural entrepreneurs in the Baarlingerpolder take measures to reduce nitrogen deposition, prevent land subsidence, reduce CO₂ emissions and give nature and biodiversity space on their farms in a way that at least does not worsen their competitive position compared to other agricultural entrepreneurs? Are agricultural entrepreneurs able to make a unique and future-proof proposition in these circumstances? In addition, we

also want to investigate whether we can stimulate and improve the interplay between entrepreneur and adjacent nature. The aim of the pilot is ultimately to lead to a feasible plan, which can serve as an example for other area assignments and developments.

Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetational cover.

2022 was an extremely hot and dry year which resulted in high water intakes. As far as we could determine, we did not observe any negative effects. The levels in the open water remained good. In the terrains themselves, some effects of desiccation could be seen. Causes: the evaporation was greater than the penetration of the water in the vegetation mats.

In 2022, the last parts were mapped for showing vegetation and flora. Now the entire national park has been mapped, everything is in view. The report will be delivered at the beginning of 2023.

The initial results in De Weerribben show that the area of floating fens and peat moss reed marshes has increased considerably. The cause of this increase is mainly due to sod cutting combined with irrigation, but probably also the good water quality and the excellent management. The area of raised peat bog woodland has decreased due to the transformation from woodland into open water. These are almost always small wooded areas where long-term conservation of the habitat type is not sustainable due to their small size and fragmentation.

In the open water that was created about 40 to 60 years ago, terrestrialisation is getting off to a good start. This year, for the first time, young terrestrialised areas could be mowed with a 'trucsor', an amphibious mowing and removal boat. Early mowing of part of the young terrestrialised area is good for the development of floating fen and combats volunteer shrubs and trees.

During the mapping, invasive exotics were also encountered in the water and on land. We must act quickly against this, otherwise nature objectives will not be achieved.

Because the province is responsible for the Natura 2000 goals, it has money to combat these invasive exotics. We are working together to combat them.

This year we realised that this is a very big job that we have to tackle together. Hopefully this will go even better and more easily in the future.

Invasive exotics: for three years now, Water fan (*Cabomba aquatica*) has been observed and controlled in collaboration with the Province of Overijssel and the Drents-Overijssels Delta Water Board. The results are mixed. Staatsbosbeheer is reluctant to take action for two reasons: the ecological impact of *Colomba* is unclear and the control of the exotics could mean that existing terrestrialised vegetation will disappear. Since it is almost impossible to eradicate the exotics, repeated control actions could lead to gene development in many locations with open water. Staatsbosbeheer now only cooperates with control actions in navigated waterways, both public and managed waterways. Staatsbosbeheer is now trying to prevent spreading by using floats and beams to close off as many water areas as possible that have *Cabomba* and through which no navigated waterways run. Monitoring will also be started to assess the impact and success of control on vegetation development. But Staatsbosbeheer will also monitor the effect of *Cabomba* in locations where no control takes place. Staatsbosbeheer is cooperating in the control of exotic species in waterways in its own areas.

The following sections of the form should only be filled in if your area is in the year before a renewal of its European Diploma for Protected Areas, i.e. year 4 after the award of the European Diploma or year 9 after its renewal.

6. Natural heritage (general abiotic description: geomorphology, geology and hydrogeology, habitats, flora, fauna, landscape) – State of conservation

- 6.1. Environment: changes or deterioration in the environment, of natural or anthropic origin, accidental or permanent, actual or anticipated
- 6.2. Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetational cover; presumed causes
- 6.3. Fauna: changes in the sedentary or migratory populations; congregating, egg-laying and breeding grounds

7. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context

- 7.1. Cultural heritage
 - 7.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage
- 7.2. Socio-economic context
 - 7.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context

8. Education and scientific interest

- 8.1. Visitors – Information policy
 - 8.1.1. Arrangements for receiving and informing the public (building, booklets, maps, cards, etc.)
 - 8.1.2. Frequentation by visitors and behavior (number, distribution in time and space)
 - 8.1.3. Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)
- 8.2. Scientific research
 - 8.2.1. Current or completed research (observation, experimentation, etc.; identification or inventory of the species listed in the appendices to the Bern Convention, etc.)
 - 8.2.2. Scientific publications

9. Site description (vulnerability, protection status, ownership, documentation)

- 9.1. Changes in legislation or regulations
- 9.2. Changes in ownership title (conversion to public property, rentals, etc.)
- 9.3. Extension or transfer, new uses (for example, conversion into total reserve)

10. Site management (management plans, budget and personnel)

- 10.1. Improvements made
 - 10.1.1. Ecological action affecting the flora and biotopes; controls of fauna
 - 10.1.2. Protection against the elements (fire, water regime)
 - 10.1.3. Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)
 - 10.1.4. Field equipment (hides and study facilities)
 - 10.1.5. Waste management
 - 10.1.6. Use of renewable energy systems
- 10.2. Management
 - 10.2.1. Administrative department: changes made
 - 10.2.2. Wardens' department: changes made
 - 10.2.3. Internal policing measures
 - 10.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action

11. Influence of the award of the European Diploma for Protected Areas