

**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)<sup>1</sup>*

**Appendix 5: Model plan for annual reports**

**Annual report for the year 2023**

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: Oostvaardersplassen

Annual report for the year: 2023

Number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas:

The European Diploma was renewed in 2021.

Name: Staatsbosbeheer :

Address: P.O. Box 2,  
3800 AA Amersfoort NL

Tel: +31 (0)30 6926111

Fax: +31 (0)30 6922978

e-mail: [w.wubben@staatsbosbeheer.nl](mailto:w.wubben@staatsbosbeheer.nl)

www: [www.staatsbosbeheer.nl](http://www.staatsbosbeheer.nl)

**Authority responsible for its management:**

Name: Staatsbosbeheer Oostvaardersplassen

Address: Kitsweg 1, 8218 Lelystad, NL

Tel: +31 (320)254585

Fax:

e-mail: [w.wubben@staatsbosbeheer.nl](mailto:w.wubben@staatsbosbeheer.nl)

[he.kuypers@staatsbosbeheer.nl](mailto:he.kuypers@staatsbosbeheer.nl)

www: [www.oostvaardersplassen.nl](http://www.oostvaardersplassen.nl)

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.

the development and use of Lelystad Airport should not jeopardise any of the Natura 2000 targets or the quality of the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve;

As reported in the last up-date the planned flying-routes have been established respecting the Natura 2000 requirements. This means that airplanes fly only at high altitudes over the Oostvaardersplassen and that the upward and downward movements occur outside the nature reserve. Recently, the discussion on the opening of Lelystad airport was declared controversial and the decision on the matter is up to a new cabinet to be formed after the November 22 elections. Earlier, it was indicated that the decision-making on the airport will not be made 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. closely monitor the effect of increasing flight activity at Lelystad Airport on birds, the achievement of the Natura 2000 goals, and the recreational interest and general tranquillity of the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve core area and buffer zones;**

There is no increased activity from Lelystad Airport. The airport is still not open to larger aircraft. So there is no monitoring data in this area. In addition it remains true that as reported in the last up-date the planned flying-routes have been established respecting the Natura 2000 requirements. This means that airplanes fly only at high altitudes over the Oostvaardersplassen and that the upward and downward movements occur outside the nature reserve.

**2. preserve the European interest and exemplary management of the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve by ensuring appropriate management of the water dynamics, large herbivore dynamics and the grazing regime in order to achieve the Natura 2000 management goals;**

As described in the previous report, we continued to develop the area in 2023 as we agreed with Flevoland Province in 2018.

The swamp reset is running smoothly and according to plan. Reed vegetation is gradually expanding. Incidentally, this is still young and fragile reed and some time will be needed for it to take root properly and expand further. We now estimate that the water level in the western part of the marsh will have to be kept low for another two years. When the reeds are well rooted and at least 1,000 hectares of reed vegetation have been added, the water will be gradually raised. A dynamic water level will then be adopted.

To achieve wind shelter for the large grazers, we have been planting shrubs and trees within large-scale exclosures since 2019. Last year, we were able to complete this work. Unfortunately, the persistent dry spell in 2023 (and previous years) meant that some of the planting did not take root properly. Repair work will then have to be done next winter.

By 2023, a fish passage has been realised at the Kitstocht. This will remove a barrier for migrating fish from the Lage Vaart to the marsh. Among others, three-spined sticklebacks can now reach the core area of the Oostvaardersplassen.

Work has continued again on the fish migration route. The route connects the Kitstocht with the Waterlands and will eventually become a 3-kilometre-long pond (artificial river) that fish can use to reach upstream spawning grounds.

By November 2023, the contours of the entire route will be clearly visible. After adoption of the new Natura 2000 management plan, the route will be completed in 2024.

In the context of the policy task to reduce the number of large grazers (red deer, cattle and horses) to a total of 1,100, we have carried out active population management over the past five years. This target number was reached at the end of winter 2022-2023, marking the start of a period of regular population management to maintain numbers.

The annual autumn count indicates how many animals will have to be removed from the area in the coming period. In the autumn of 2023, 860 red deer, 345 heck cattle and 380 horses roamed the Oostvaardersplassen.

Up to and including the preparation of this report, no alternative nature reserves in the Netherlands or abroad have been found where our surplus horses could be brought.

**3. envisage further extension of the reserve by creating a wide corridor to the Horsterwold, which would contribute to natural population dynamics and ecosystem management;**

The connection between the Oostvaardersplassen and the Horsterwold is still not a topic on the political agenda. The Groenlinks party has included Oostvaarderswold in its election manifesto again, but given the current political winds it will not be able to create a majority for this initiative.

As previously indicated, serious work was done last year to realize 'wet' connections with the area around the Oostvaardersplassen. The connection with the Lage Vaart for migratory fish has been made and there are far-reaching plans to realize connections between the Oostvaardersplassen and the Markermeer. In the Oostvaardersoever project, plans to exchange nutrients and fish between the two areas are being further developed. The implementation phase is expected to start in 2026.

**4. maintain and further strengthen co-operation between the management authorities, the surrounding municipalities and the province in order to limit any impact on the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve when reviewing urbanisation and zoning plans, and ensure sufficient buffer zones around the core area of the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve;**

In the past reporting year, close cooperation with Flevoland Province and the municipalities of Lelystad and Almere continued. As part of the development of National Park Nieuw Land, a lot of work is being done to create a number of buffer zones around the core area. With so-called gateway areas for the national park, the recreational pressure on the core area of Oostvaardersplassen will be absorbed in the immediate vicinity. This allows the number of excursions through the Natura2000 to be limited. The gateway areas form a natural buffer between the urban development in Almere and the neighbourhood expansion of De Warande in Lelystad. Cooperation with the various authorities has taken shape in separate project groups for the gate areas and the national park as a whole. Frequent coordination takes place at administrative, official and implementation levels.

**5. in co-operation with stakeholders at all levels (representatives of the local and regional authorities, managing authorities, scientists, non-governmental organisations and civil society associations), design a transparent and widely acceptable mechanism to control the populations of large herbivore mammals; continue to raise awareness and inform the public at large about the objectives of such a mechanism, its direct effect on animal welfare and its long-term effect on the biodiversity of the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve ;**

The provincial policy framework for Oostvaardersplassen as in force from 2018 has been translated into a management plan with accompanying practical implementation protocols. The public has been consistently, frequently and transparently informed of the changed course in recent years. The relationship between reducing the number of large grazers (to a total of 1,100) and a positive development with regard to the number of bird species (and biodiversity) in the area is hereby consistently established and the first tentative results are noted.

In recent years we have increasingly noticed that the 'new policy' has been gradually accepted. In particular, changes in fauna management have attracted most attention in recent years. By 2023, we have a clear decrease in the focus on this theme and birdlife and the projects we are working on are becoming more prominent. The area and its management are slowly becoming 'normal'. In spring 2023, we were able to indicate that task of reducing the number of large grazers to around 1,100 animals has been completed and that regular management is in place from now on. There are still individuals and small groups of people, who disagree with the current management, but this has long since ceased to have the proportions of the years 2018 and 2019.

**6. following the integration of the peripheral zones – Hollandse Hout, Oostvaardersveld, Kotterbos and Oostvaardersbos – into the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve, finalise their management plans and ensure that they are consistent with the management of the core area of the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve;**

Plans have been made or are under development at various levels, with the alignment between core area and the surrounding 'shell' forming the basis. A zoning plan has been made for the entire Oostvaardersplassen area. This specifically describes which recreational opportunities are allowed to take place in which parts of the area. A separate management plan has been developed for the Trekweg area (the

area between the A6 and the Lage Vaart). A management plan for the Oostvaardersveld is currently being written. These plan developments explicitly address the spatial relationship with the core area. For the national park gateway areas 'Oostvaardersplassen Lelystad' and 'Oostvaardersplassen Almere', a number of the planned developments have gone into effect by 2023. These always take into account the connection between the 'shell' and the core area. On the Almere side, for example, a start has been made on expanding the Visitor Centre. This will create more space for education and information about the ecosystem in the Oostvaardersplassen and National Park Nieuw Land, among other things. The Trekweg area (as part of the Oostvaardersveld) is being managed as a harrier area with cows from a nature-inclusive farmer in the area. This also marks the first steps towards accommodating farmers in the nature reserve on the edges of Oostvaardersplassen. This will ease the sharp transitions between 'dark green' nature and intensively used farmland and intensify cooperation between farmer and nature manager. The harrier foraging areas in the edge zone of the Oostvaardersplassen support the core area, where the marsh vegetation provides the ideal breeding habitat.

**7. monitor the increase in numbers and the impact of visitors to avoid any negative effects either on the quality of the recreational experience or on the natural treasures of the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve; take remedial measures if the results indicate negative effects on the intrinsic value of the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve;**

The ambition to be able to monitor in real time how many visitors there are within the national park and therefore also within the Oostvaardersplassen area remains and is placed on the agenda at national park level. In order to monitor visitor numbers, we register how many people participate in excursions through the core area. We also register the number of visitors to the Visitor Centers. This provides reliable data for visitor management.

The figures are shown in an annual monitoring report, which will be published in early January.

**8. continue to reflect on the creation of the Nieuw Land National Park, encompassing the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve, and consider applying for the European Diploma for this national park;**

There is energy from various partners on the further development of Nationaal Park Nieuw Land, of which Oostvaardersplassen, Markerwadden, Lepelaarplassen and Markermeer are the most important parts. There are no new developments on applying for the European Diploma for the whole national park.

**9. give more visibility to the European Diploma logo and raise awareness about its aims and objectives on the website of the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve, through social media, flyers, brochures and information panels in visitors' centres and in the field.**

The logo is used on information and orientation signs within the Oostvaardersplassen area. As indicated in the previous report, the logo is not applied to signs and brochures where Nieuw Land National Park is the primary 'sender'.

**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.

Also in 2023, work continued on the tasks as formulated in the 2018 Provincial Policy Framework. The winter (2022-2023) ended with the achievement of the target of reducing the number of large grazers to the agreed 1100 animals. From 2023, therefore, the management of large grazers entered another phase where numbers are actively regulated.

In the brochure 'De Oostvaardersplassen in beeld; Naar een dynamisch en verrassend landschap', released in 2019, the landscape tasks were shown on a map and provided with impressions of how it would become. Last year, we were again able to make great strides for these projects. Here, we look back at the progress per task:

**1. Shelter.** In October 2022, we reported that the last trees and bushes for the shelter in the core area of Oostvaardersplassen had been planted. Last year, unfortunately, we found that a small part of the planting area did not survive the dry summer. This means we will replant in spots this planting season. Of course, the dry conditions of recent years are out of our control and 'forest' that has to develop from the ground up is

more vulnerable than replanting trees and shrubs in an existing forest. So there is still remedial work to be done here in the hope that conditions will be more favourable for the young plantings next year.

**2. Marsh reset.** The level reduction initiated in 2018 in the western part of the marsh is bearing fruit. The intended restoration of reed vegetation is proceeding according to plan. The aim is to develop 500 hectares of additional reed vegetation around and in the Great Lake. In recent years, we have seen pioneer vegetation of marsh endive and that's gradually being replaced by reed on the dry lake.

**3. Water in the grassy area.** After the breeding season, the contractor picked up where he left off in 2022. Digging pools and creating wet grasslands in the Waterlands and the Beemlanden. To develop more wet grasslands, the ideal food habitat for waders, an earthen embankment has been constructed on the Beemlanden, parallel to the quay along the marsh. This embankment will eventually be able to retain water and provide a gradual transition between the marsh and dry grasslands.

Hard work was also done on the fish migration route between the Lage Vaart and the Waterlands. Isolated pools along the management road were enlarged, connected and provided with nature-friendly banks. The contours of the route are clearly present in the landscape by the end of 2023.

To make the gradient between Lage Vaart and the Waterlands bridgeable for fish, two fish passages have been constructed. The basin weir passage at the Kitstocht was officially opened on 11 May and fish used it immediately.

**4. Oostvaardersplassen Almere.** On 3 November, the renovation of the De Oostvaarders Nature Experience Centre on the Almere side of the Oostvaarderplassen started. After years of preparation, the expansion of the building with space for education, volunteers, excursions, additional catering and information facilities with a permanent exhibition will become a reality. The cooperation between the Municipality of Almere, Staatsbosbeheer and Stad & Natuur is now even more visible than before.

**5. Oostvaardersplassen Lelystad.** The plans for the area, such as the construction of a new water course between the Buizerdweg and the BuitenCentrum and the creation of cycling and walking paths were further elaborated last year. Thanks to a grant contribution from the European LEADER fund, a 15-kilometre bridle path through the Hollandse Hout was constructed in the second half of 2023. This fulfilled a wish for many a horse rider.

**6. Recreation in the core area.** By 2023, major steps will have been taken in this area. This task includes in particular a few infrastructural projects that will enhance the experience for visitors to the Triangle. The most notable is the construction of a 12-metre-high observation tower at the northern tip of the Triangle. The tower will provide beautiful views of the marshland, the Wetlands and the wet and dry grasslands on the horizon. A unique view of the vast wetland. The bridges to the Triangle have been replaced and a boardwalk from the Outdoor Centre to the Triangle has been realised. On 15 June, the renovated and wheelchair-accessible Sea Eagle hut was officially reopened.

**7. 'Showcase' National Park Nieuw Land.** The konik horses in the 'Trekweggebied', the area between the Lage Vaart and the A6 motorway, have made way for cows from an organic farmer. On 19 April, the cows were released into the area and we wrote a blog about it. Next year, we will look at how to continue managing this area.

A number of changes occurred in the Oostvaardersplassen management team last year. The departure of the senior ranger created a vacancy. Duties were taken over this year by the area manager and two junior rangers. Incidentally, this has not led to major problems in implementation, but the management planning has been delayed.

One of the experienced junior rangers left Oostvaardersplassen for another area. His position has been filled again. This brings the team back to full strength.

From 2024, a more user-friendly planning and management system will be used. We are expected to start working with the modified map-based system from early next year. Over the past year, the management of the area has been carried out in the agreed manner and we have not had to postpone any projects or activities due to a lack of financing. Financing was secured with provincial contributions for the implementation of the tasks arising from the policy framework in addition to regular subsidies (SNL, Leader) and cooperation funds from the municipalities of Lelystad and Almere.

**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.

No changes in boundaries.

**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.