

**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 2018
Period: 01.10.2017 to 30.09.2018**

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: **Naturschutzgebiet "Wurzacher Ried"**

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas:
2009 until 2019 (at present 9 years)

Central authority concerned:

Name: Ministerium für Umwelt, Klima und Energiewirtschaft Baden-Württemberg

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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.

No conditions were attached.

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. The peat eco-museum in the outlying area of the reserve will constitute a new attraction. It should provide information about protection issues, and appropriate facilities – in particular a tall tower with a panoramic view – should be installed. Funding should preferably be sought on a partnership basis;

As to recommendation 1:

The Peat Museum with the Peat Railway and Peat Educational Trail has evolved into an attraction and an important and well-attended building block of the educational work carried out in the Wurzacher Ried, with annual visitor numbers reaching again around 14,000 in the year under review. The Peat Museum is run on a voluntary basis by the local culture and heritage preservation society "Wurzen" with the support of the city of Bad Wurzach and the Wurzacher Ried Nature Conservation Centre.

For the planned construction of a viewing tower in connection with guided tours of visitors in the Haidgau peat works, the city of Bad Wurzach has ordered investigations of the foundation in the peat bed to create a planning basis. This project has again been discussed intensively in the last meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation Council of the Nature Conservation Centre Wurzacher Ried on 16 Oct. 2018. There was a general consensus that this project was reasonable and useful, and meanwhile the financing possibilities are being examined. All parties endeavour to transfer the project in 2019 into the concrete planning phase.

2. The scale of the projects carried out by a small permanent team is considerable. The special effort made to provide guided tours and cater for school parties deserves support. It is necessary to find means of obtaining such support in consultation with the education authorities;

As to recommendation 2:

In the Nature Conservation Centre Wurzacher Ried, about 300 events and projects are executed every year, which are now attended by around 34,000 visitors. Around 100 projects in particular are aimed at children, youngsters and school classes within the framework of the nature study curriculum and these are attended by around 1,700 participants.

Contact has been made with the responsible school administration with a view to arranging for an increase in staffing for the Nature Conservation Centre team, and intensive talks aimed at improving the cooperation with the school administration authorities are held. A study group deployed in the reporting year on the Regierungspräsidium level with the target to improve the cooperation between schools and extra-curricular learning sites and meetings on the level of both competent State Ministries resulted in a closer exchange, but it was so far not possible to obtain concrete results in view of personnel reinforcement.

3. The B465 trunk road that cuts across the Ried is now less of a problem, thanks to the measures taken. In the medium or longer term, the downgrading of the road should make it possible to eliminate motor vehicle traffic, in favour of pedestrians and cyclists;

As to recommendation 3:

The former recommendations of the Council of Europe concerning the B 465 could meanwhile be for the most part successfully implemented. In addition, the road section crossing the reed has been given in 2015 rank number 5 in the list of the most important cross-linking sections in the "state-wide concept of re-linking of roads in Baden-Württemberg" of the Ministry for Transport of Baden-Württemberg". Against this background, the Regierungspräsidium Tübingen – department 44 [road planning] in technical co-ordination with department 56 [nature conservation and landscape planning] has commissioned a feasibility study for further-reaching nature-conserving improvement in this road section. In the period under review, all kinds of surveys and site examinations were carried out and appropriate proposals for technical solutions were examined. The results will presumably be submitted in the coming year for further discussions.

4. The areas cultivated with maize on the slopes surrounding the peat bog should be restricted, for example by buying up land. This would also have a beneficial impact on the quality of the water;

5. The major effort made to buy up land in the outlying area should continue. The problem concerning the slopes of Albers, where five hectares that have been purchased are still being intensively farmed, needs to be addressed;

As to recommendations 4 and 5:

The acquisition of land will be continued as the financial circumstances of the State of Baden-Württemberg and the existing offers from private land owners allow. Concrete efforts are currently being made to possibly acquire of the hillside areas around Albers. As matters stand, the long-time efforts to buy the hillside area owned by the State which are very important for the protected area might be put into effect soon.

6. The proliferation of high-voltage power lines over the outlying area is blighting the landscape. Requests that they be buried must continue to be reiterated, even if the costs are high.

As to recommendation 6:

Contacts with the competent energy provider have been made many times concerning the removal or the burying of high-voltage power lines in the Wurzacher Ried. However, it was not possible so far to reach an agreement for the requested measures.

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.

Maintenance and development work

The measures stipulated in the maintenance and development plan, in particular mowing work in the bog meadows, and rewetting measures progressed further in the period under review. In the maintenance and development zone, the mowing operations were mainly made by local farmers (about 300 ha; 35 local farmers). About 15 ha bog meadows are mowed with the state-owned tracked mower.

Natura 2000-Management plan

In the year under review, the Regierungspräsidium Tübingen continued the faunistic and floristic examinations and mappings needed for the preparation of the new Natura 2000 management plan. The field-work is largely completed and is now being evaluated. The surveys of the relevant animal and plant species and the recording of FFH types could also be completed. The management plan will presumably be completed by mid 2019.

Monitoring

In the year under review, the monitoring was suspended due to the preparatory work for the Natura 2000 Management Plan. It is planned to invite new tenders upon completion of the Natura 2000 management plan and to carry it on according to the updated maintenance and develop measures.

Moor protection approach of the state of Baden-Württemberg

The State government of Baden-Württemberg expedited the targets fixed in the State's moor protection concept. This concept aims at the middle and long-term renaturation of all moors capable of regeneration and the adjustment of land use of low moor soils in the sense of climate protection and maintenance of biological diversity. The Wurzacher Ried is one of six pilot sites in this state in which research orders were contracted out to specialized planning offices for the further optimisation of renaturation measures. In the year under review, comprehensive hydrological data were collated with the help of a close-knit measurement level network to prepare and implement an appropriate list of measures for the rewetting of disturbed moor sites. The preparation of a concrete measurement plan is provided for the coming year.

Nature Conservation Centre Wurzacher Ried

The Nature Conservation Centre Bad Wurzach is a central and important institution to manage the Wurzacher Ried, to coordinate all maintenance measures and PR work and in particular to inform visitors. In the year under review, the Centre carried out about 312 events and was visited by around 34,000 guests. The permanent exhibition "MOOR EXTREM" which was newly designed in 2013 with a financial volume of about 800,000 EURO in the new annex of the former monastery building Maria Rosengarten continues to enjoy

great popularity and is an important part of the Centre's education work. In 2017, the Centre could move its office and administrative rooms into the historic monastery complex Maria Rosengarten and thus create an excellent environment for a successful and future-oriented work of the Centre.

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 period under review.

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 activities connected with the European Diploma

The request of the Council of Europe to refer to the European Diploma with its logo in relevant PR activities was complied with. Meanwhile the diploma together with the logo has been integrated in the programme leaflet, the website of the Nature Conservation Centre (see www.wurzacher-ried.de), the info flier Wurzacher Ried, and the signposts of the protected area. The permanent exhibition of the information centre Wurzacher Ried has even devoted an own station to the European Diploma. The European Diploma will also appear in future in releases and reprints of existing publications or new infrastructures.

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

After a really golden month of October, autumn 2017 was unstable with permanent ups and downs of temperatures, heavy cold spells and early snowfall. However, the year ended with the warmest turn of the year ever since weather records began. In the further course, the winter remained mild, wet and changeable with a long period of snow. Icy periods of cold weather followed end of February until end of March before the temperatures rose in April into a turbo- spring and started a consistently warm and much too dry summer of the century which lasted until autumn (Source: www.wetterwarte-sued.com)

6.2. Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetational cover; presumed causes

The reduction of the nutrient content of the peripheral wetland and litter meadows is clearly discernible and the initiated vegetation development continues as planned in the rewetting areas. In the degenerated former peat cutting areas, peat moss growth has increased which shows rewarding tendencies of regeneration. The formation of woodland and scrub in the reed has clearly been reduced by the rewetting measures. The water-logging activities of the beaver (*Castor fiber*) that has migrated into the area since 2000 does also support this development and increases the habitat diversity.

6.3. Fauna: changes in the sedentary or migratory populations; congregating, egg-laying and breeding grounds

The beaver population in the ried continues to be stable with 8 – 10 families. The negative effects caused by the beavers' digging and water-logging activities on the water levels in the renaturation and cultivated areas must be regularly encountered with improving and securing measures in the water-logging areas or with hydrological regulation measures.

For the third time, the crane breeds again in the renaturation areas of the Wurzacher Ried, and also the Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) breeds again successfully. The populations of ground-nesting bird species which are important in nature protection (for instance Common Snipe, Spotted Crake) continue to live on a high level with increasing tendency in the renaturation areas. This is a striking

example for the positive development of the biotope structures in the renaturation areas of the Wurzacher Ried.

7. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context

7.1. Cultural heritage

The "Oberschwäbische Torfmuseum (Peat Museum) Bad Wurzach" continues to enjoy a great popularity. It shows in a most impressive way how the history of usage and of nature in the ried is interlinked. The peat museum together with the peat educational trail and the peat railway is a further important module in the educational efforts of the Wurzacher Ried. Trips with the refurbished peat railway have meanwhile become a fixed component of the visitor guidance and training concept of the Nature Conservation Centre.

In the framework of a school project in cooperation with the Werkrealschule Bad Wurzach, scrub clearance measures were carried out on 8 dates in the Haidgauer Peat Works and the peat trail. The target of these actions was to clear the site of the former peat factory and the regeneration areas around the peat trail.

7.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage

No changes.

7.2. Socio-economic context

The Wurzacher Ried with its European Diploma plays an important role in the tourism concept and the nation-wide advertising of the city of Wurzach. Thus it is an important location factor for the spa and health sector and tourism industry of Bad Wurzach. The Nature Conservation Centre and the guests visiting the reed are also an economic factor for the city Bad Wurzach that should not be under-estimated (gastronomy, overnight stays, bus enterprises, trade etc.).

Within the buffer zone, a large part of the surfaces is maintained by farmers. On the basis of contractual agreements, a total of about 40,000 Euros per year is spent to the benefit of local farm operations.

7.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context

No changes

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.)

The most important institution for the information of visitors is the Nature Conservation Centre in Bad Wurzach. On 17th April 2013, the Centre's new permanent exhibition „MOOR EXTREM“ and the information area were opened. Ever since, the Nature Conservation Centre has evolved into a central place for information, encounters and education focusing on the maintenance of the nature reserve Wurzacher Ried and the related PR work and environmental education.

8.1.2. Frequentation by visitors and behavior (number, distribution in time and space)

Apart from the permanent exhibition MOOR EXTREM, four further temporary exhibitions were organised in the period under review related to current nature protection topics.

129 tours guided by employees of the Nature Conservation Centre were carried out in the reed in the reporting year in which 2,139 persons were informed in the nature reserve. Some guided tours were devoted to special topics (ornithological tours, botanic tours, tours into the former peat-cutting area to show rewetting measures, forest tours etc.). In addition, 12 lectures concerning the Wurzacher Ried were given which were attended by 300 visitors.

In addition, various events for children and young adults were offered. In the so-called „class-room in the ried“, 71 school-classes and youth groups with 1,196 participants were familiarized with nature and sensitized for questions of nature protection. In the "kids' afternoon" which takes place regularly (except during school holidays) 455 children were looked after in 34 events. 5 further events were organized for children with 60 participants in the framework of summer holidays programme. All in all,

1,715 kids and adolescents took parts in environmental education programmes of the Nature Conservation Centre.

In the reporting year, 312 events with 6,257 participants took place in the Nature Conservation Centre. If you add the 27,755 individual visitors of the exhibition MOOR EXTREM resp. the information area of the Nature Conservation Centre, 34,012 visitors were looked after by the Centre and informed on the Wurzacher Ried. In addition, about 14,000 guests were guided through the moor in the peat railway by the Kultur- und Heimatverein (culture and local heritage association).

The persons visiting the nature reserve on their own are not recorded by the Nature Conservation Centre so that their number is unknown. The visitors of the ried mainly focus on the footpaths around the ried lake near the city and the spa gardens. Other hotspots which are however less frequented are the cycling and hiking trail from Bad Wurzach to Dietmanns and the hiking paths between the ried lake and the Haidgauer Quellseen (source) in the South of the area.

No visitors are allowed to enter the ecological sensitive core zone of the reserve without being attended by expert guides of the Nature Conservation Centre leading special tours to the former peat-cutting area Haidgau. Since spa and holiday guests come to Bad Wurzach year-round, the protected area is frequented by visitors throughout the year.

8.1.3. Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)

In autumn 2017 the Environment Minister of the State of Baden-Württemberg, Franz Untersteller, visited the Nature Conservation Centre, followed in summer of the reporting year by Winfried Kretschmann, Minister-President of Baden-Württemberg. In order to get an impression of the new premises of the Centre in the refurbished former monastery Maria Rosengarten and of the present state of planning and measures in the framework of the State's moor protection concept. Both politicians expressed their satisfaction with the positive developments in the accommodation of the Centre and the promising measures taken in the pilot area Wurzacher Ried. They promised in particular to support the efforts to build a viewing tower (see recommendation 1 related to the diploma renewal).

In the course of the evaluation to extend the European Diploma for the Wurzacher Ried, Robert Brunner, expert of the Council of Europe, visited the area on 09 and 10 July 2018.

On 25 July 2018 Alexander Bonde, Secretary General of DBU, visited the site on the occasion of the presentation of the research project „Evidence-based decision support to improve the entire ecological situation of waterbodies and surrounding agricultural landscapes”. See No. 8.2.1.

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.)

In the framework of the State's Moor Protection Programme, hydrological basic data are collected in a part of the Haidgau peat mining area (pilot area) via water levels for the further development of adequate renaturation measures. At the present time, examinations are carried out in the Wurzacher Ried in the research project „Evidence-based decision support to improve the entire ecological situation of waterbodies and surrounding agricultural landscapes” by the *Institut für Naturschutzökologie und Landschaftsmanagement, Landespflege Freiburg* (consultancy in the field of applied conservation ecology and landscape management).

8.2.2. Scientific publications

No current publications in the reporting period.

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

9.1. Changes in legislation or regulations

There were no changes in the reporting period concerning the natural reserve in the reporting period. We refer to the ordinance issued by the Regierungspräsidium Tübingen concerning the Naturschutzgebiet "Wurzacher Ried" dated 02 October 1996.

9.2. Changes in ownership title (conversion to public property, rentals, etc.)

No changes in the reporting period.

- 9.3. Extension or transfer, new uses (for example, conversion into total reserve)
No changes in the reporting period.

In the framework of the FFH Directive, the outer borders of the FFH area were made concrete in the scale 1: 5,000 and adjusted to existing land parcel or protected area borders.

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

The maintenance and development measures within the maintenance and extensivisation zone using tracked mowers and in cooperation with local farmers were continued according to the maintenance and development plan (about 300 ha; 35 local farmers) and extended in certain areas. The development of ecologically important secondary habitats (e.g. bedding meadows for moor grass – FFH-LRT 6410) was advanced.

In the rewetting areas, various repairs and improvements were carried out in the water-logging setups resp. in the water-logging devices to secure and optimize the hydrologic balance impaired by beaver activities.

The large extensive grazing area that was established some years ago with around 20 ha of peripheral moor grassland with a herd of water buffaloes (about 17 animals) shows a very positive development in the structural diversity, in particular for avifauna.

Measures for the protection of species in the Haidgauer source area for the orchid *Dactylorhiza ochroleuca* which had been considerably repressed by reeds and saw-sedge were continued in the reporting year.

The maintenance contracts entered into in the framework of the state's species conservation programme for scrub clearance and mowing of habitats of the seriously endangered butterfly "Large Heath" (*Coenonympha hero*) and the seriously endangered locust species "Lesser mottled grasshopper" (*Stenobothrus stigmaticus*) in Dietmannser Ried were also continued.

The measures to reduce the Canadian Goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*) were continued in order to control proliferating neophytes.

- 10.1.2. Protection against the elements (fire, water regime)
No measures.

10.1.3. Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)

In the framework of the maintenance of hiking paths, regular maintenance work was carried out in cooperation with the state forestry office and the city of Bad Wurzach in various path sectors, particularly in boardwalk paths. All hiking paths were examined over the year several times for sources of danger and safety deficiencies (e.g. trees, defective boards). Defective boards and missing signposts were replaced and potentially dangerous trees – particularly in view of Ash Dieback - were examined and removed if need be.

- 10.1.4. Field equipment (hides and study facilities)
No measures.

- 10.1.5. Waste management
No measures

10.1.6. Use of renewable energy systems

10.2. Management

- 10.2.1. Administrative department: changes made
No changes in the year under review.

- 10.2.2. Wardens' department: changes made
No changes in the year under review.

10.2.3. Internal policing measures
No changes in the year under review.

10.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action
None.

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

The award of the European Diploma for the Wurzacher Ried caused a better acceptance and recognition of the great importance of the Wurzacher Ried in the public and administration.

The diploma itself but also the recommendations in the framework of the diploma renewal are most helpful for the ecological work, the implementation of sustainable targets, and of maintenance and development measures. One of the positive effects of former recommendations of the Council of Europe was that the Wurzach Basin and the peripheral moraine ridge could be kept free from wind turbines or industrial parks of importance for the site.

In addition, the European Diploma has a high advertising impact not only for the city of Bad Wurzach with its spa and touristic institutions but also for the Nature Conservation Centre and nature protection in general.