NAARDERMEER

Nature Reserve NL 2018

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD
December 5, 2017 – December 3, 2018

In accordance with the relevant directive of the Council of Europe, this report describes only the changes which took place in the period under review.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
Committee of Ministers
Comité des Ministres

Text:
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Natuurmonumenten

RESOLUTION ResDip (2008) 1
ON THE REGULATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA OF PROTECTED AREAS

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

ANNUAL REPORT FOR NAARDERMEER

State:	Netherlands
Name of the area:	Naardermeer
Awarded since:	5 may 2004

Central authority concerned:

Name:	Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
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e-mail:	Via https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/contact/contactformulier
www:	https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-agriculture-nature-and-food-quality

Authority responsible for its management:

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1&2. Conditions and/or recommendations for award or renewal

Based on the Resolution CM/ResDip(2009)7 on the renewal of the European Diploma of Protected Areas awarded to the Naardermeer Nature Reserve (Netherlands) the following condition and recommendations are

Condition:

1. *The authorities concerned are urged to respect the integrity of the open polder area surrounding the Naardermeer and to abandon all projects related to the motorway connection (A6-A9) which would have negative effects on the diploma area*

The A6-A9 project has been cancelled. In 2006 the decision was made to widen the current A1 motorway instead of connecting A6-A9 with a new motorway. Nevertheless attention will be paid to any eventual revival of these plans. We also continue monitoring possible threats caused by planned large infrastructural projects in the surroundings of the Naardermeer, even in the earliest stage.

Recommendations:

1. *The efforts to improve the hydrological conditions of the reserve must be continued by focusing on reducing the pumping out of drinking water in the Gooi hills and completing municipal sewerage plans in order to increase the quality of infiltrated water.*

The winning of drinking water is at a sustainable level and is not affecting the water level of the Reserve. One possible threat was the recently planned development of small scale groundwater winning by the Gooische Hockey Club (GHC) to irrigate their hockey fields, which could affect the grasslands of the Laegieskamp. The plans were revealed in November 2017. Natuurmonumenten has targeted this potential impact in good cooperation with GHC which resulted in a solution which has no impact on the Laegieskamp's natural values. A monitoring plan is included in the solution.

2. *The decreasing area and quality of reedbeds (phragmites and other pioneer vegetation) should be subject to specific research and increased management efforts;*

Research on a more flexible water lever is developed by the Regional Water Authority (Waternet) in cooperation with a.o. Natuurmonumenten. Additionally, an expert meeting took place to discuss the subject. One of the outcomes of this meeting was the decision to raise the upper limit of the water level by 10 cm in winter time. This change will be reflected in a new water level agreement. The decision to raise the water level has to be formalized via a so called Water Plan, which is a legal document. The procedure of the Water Plan will start in 2020.

Next to that, Natuurmonumenten, Waternet and the province of Noord-Holland participated in constructing a new development plan to also raise the water levels outside the Naardermeer core area (the part within the dykes surrounding the old Naardermeer). This plan, called development plan "de Schil" (Shell) benefits the growth of reedbeds and its spatial distribution. The western side of the outer Naardermeer is rich on phosphate. Together with a more natural water level and (much) more water this should boost the reedbeds and provide new breeding habitat for a.o. Purple Heron, Bittern, Bearded Tit, Savi's Warbler and Great Reed Warbler. The development plan is due to be integrated in the upcoming Natura 2000 Management Plan for the Naardermeer (province of Noord-Holland), which is planned to be finished in 2020.

3. *Nature restoration and development around the Naardermeer core area is to be fully completed; to that end missing lands (notably in polders south of the lake) should be made available to Natuurmonumenten, mainly in view of the long-term maintenance of optimal water level management and the restoration of biodiversity. The province and the Dutch Government Service for Land and Water Use are urged to make greater efforts to finalise the Naardermeer recovery plan.*

Although it was not yet possible for Natuurmonumenten to acquire all the missing lands and this way completing the Naardermeer Recovery Plan, it was possible to buy a large property in the south-western part of the Naardermeer Nature Reserve, the so-called De Jong grounds. The other missing properties, about 20ha in the

Overscheense Polder, are mainly in agricultural use. These properties are part of the development plan “De Schil” as mentioned above at Recommendation 2. The province of Noord-Holland has taken initiative to obtain these last properties and has started negotiations with the owners. When obtained the grounds will have to be managed conform the requirements as mentioned in the development plan. This does not automatically mean that these grounds will be sold to Natuurmonumenten. Due to Dutch law the grounds have to be sold in an open process, with the requirements as mentioned in the development plan as binding principles. After realizing the development plan the Naardermeer core area will be almost totally surrounded by nature restoration areas in 2025/2026.

4. *Regional planning processes should avoid further habitat fragmentation in the corridor landscapes towards the IJmeer, the IJsselmeer, the Vecht River, the Ankeveense Plassen and the Gooi hills. The realisation of the Dutch ecological main structure, its “wet axis” and “robust connections” with the Naardermeer as a core area must be given high priority.*

The landscape concept of a wet axis crossing The Netherlands was somehow revoked by a past government. Some important measures were nevertheless implemented aiming at reducing the barrier effect caused by the major roads that delimit the Reserve. Next to that, the railroad has been provided with no less than 9 eco-tunnels in 2019. First results are already known: camera footage shows the crossing of Grass Snake, Pine Marten, Weasel and a variety of mice.

a. *A) The establishment of larger ecological zones in the surrounding agricultural area enabling the further restoration of water levels is recommended, in order to avoid leakage from the reserve and further shinking of peat layers.*
   B) Restoration programmes transforming polders into wetlands must be encouraged in order to link the Naardermeer with its surroundings; this needs agro-environmental agreements with the agricultural sector.

As said at Recommendation 2 and 3, in the near future the Naardermeer Nature Reserve will be developed in a more sustainable way. Together with the Regional Water Authority and the province of Noord-Holland plans are made for the complete Naardermeer Nature Reserve, including the planned water level raise inside and outside. The procedures to realize these plans will start in 2020.

b. *The possibilities to improve the connecting corridor between Naardermeer and Ankeveense plassen by reconstructing the actual road on pillars (removal of a barrier) are to be considered.*

The corridor has been realized and has been proven to be very effective. The arrival of the European Otter in the Naardermeer at the beginning of 2017 is the biggest succes so far, being absent for 50 years. The estimated population consist of 1-3 animals. Also 3-4 Badgers have reached the Naardermeer and have made the Naardermeer their home. The corridor consists of two separate passages under the road with both wet and dry components.

c. *A) In relation to the construction of a new motorway connection (A6-A9), the zero option, alternative routes and the possibility of underground passage NW of the reserve are to be duly investigated in a preliminary Environmental Impact Study.*
   B) The effects of widening the A1 on the nearby reserve are to be minimised.
   C) Risks for pollution deriving from transport along motorways and railroad are to be minimised and carefully caught.
   D) In 2009 the Committee of Ministers renewed de EU diploma under the ***condition*** *that:*
   - the authorities concerned are urged to respect the integrity of the open polder area surrounding the Naardermeer and to abandon all projects related to the motorway connection (A6-A9) which would have negative effects on the diploma area.

In 2006 the decision was made to widen the current A1 motorway instead of connecting A6-A9 with a new motorway. Since then the possibilities of an underground passage or alternative routes are abandoned. In the years following 2006 the plan for widening the A1 became more concrete and in 2013 the actual widening started. If everything goes as planned the reconstruction will be finished in 2020, including a large eco passage under the A1 between the Naardermeer and the lakes of the Veluwerandmeren.

3. Site Management

Natuurmonumenten worked together with the Dutch Rail Organisation ProRail and the province of Noord-Holland to create 9 ecological passages under the railroad which divides the Naardermeer in two separate parts. These passages were realized in August 2019. There will be no direct exchange of water between the two parts to secure the water quality in the southern part of the Naardermeer (Bovenste Blik). The water quality of the Bovenste Blik is of a different quality compared to the northern part, which has resulted in different vegetation types on both sides. When in the future both water qualities are comparable the wet fauna passages can be easily opened to create direct exchange. Further aspects will be described at 10.

4. Boundaries

There have been no changes towards the boundaries of the Naardermeer.

5. Other information

None.

6. Natural heritage (general a biotic 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.

Due to extreme draught during summertime we had to let in extra, undephosphorized water in 2018 from the river Vecht to prevent the peat from getting too dry. The peat vegetation was saved and as far as we can tell there were no other negative effects on other habitat types. One of the side effects was the arrival of two new fish species in the Naardermeer (both exotic species): Pikeperch and Western Tubenose Goby. Only two Pikeperch were caught during a fish monitoring at the end of 2018 (results were published in 2019). Western Tubenose Goby was more common with more than 40 individuals. In 2019 we had another very dry year, but the capacity of the Dephosphorization Installation was good enough to deliver enough dephosphorized, clean water in the Naardermeer.

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

In the Laegieskamp at the eastern part of the Naardermeer Nature Reserve New Zealand Pygmy Weed has been found in an isolated pond. This invasive species tends to be very aggressive and has the potential to cover a pond and edges completely within one year, suffocating all native plants. We immediately undertook action to remove all visible plants on a weekly basis for 4 months in a row during 2017, 2018 and 2019. Numbers are still very small. However, in 2020 a decision will be made about continuing these efforts. The alternative is to fill up the pond with soil and, in one action, create a new one close by.

In 2009 the Committee of Ministers renewed de EU diploma under the recommendation that: the decreasing area and quality of reed beds (Phragmites and other pioneer vegetation) should be subject to specific research and increased management efforts.

In the centre of the Naardermeer reed beds are fenced out since 2012 to improve these beds as a breeding habitat for Purple Herons. Nets surrounding several reed beds disable geese to fly in and forage on young reed stems. After testing several types of nets the past year we had a break-through in 2017. The amount of breeding pairs of Purple Herons in the netted reed beds almost doubled in 2017 towards 101 breeding pairs. In 2018 the number of breeding pairs was back to 63, which is considered to be normal for the Naardermeer (and still is higher than the results in the years prior to 2017). In 2019 more reed beds were be fenced off which raised the amount of breeding pairs towards 86.

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

The success of the Purple Heron has been mentioned above. Like 2018 the Black Terns had one breeding attempt but failed to raise a nest. The terns seem to favor other breeding sites outside the Naardermeer. Other important breeding birds populations or wintering bird populations have been stable. One big surprise: the Lilipad Whiteface *Leucorrhinia caudalis*, in the Netherlands only known from de Wieden, arrived in 2018 in the Naardermeer in significant numbers (about 150 individuals). The origin of these dragonflies was uncertain. It could have been both migratory and/or new-born individuals. However, in May 2019 a freshly emerged Lilipad Whiteface was found and photographed, providing evidence for a new population of this extremely rare dragonfly species in the Netherlands.
Another striking occurrence was the increase in breeding Cetti's Warblers. The first and only breeding attempt for the Naardermeer was in 2018. This year however no more than 7 territorial males were found. Cetti's Warblers are still quite rare in these parts of the Netherlands.

7. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context

7.1. Cultural heritage: changes concerning cultural heritage.
No changes.

7.2. 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.).

Several new information signs have been placed in 2019. Next to that, the Naardermeer website is updated several times per month with relevant information and news. We also have an active Naardermeer Facebook and Twitter account.

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

During the year almost all of the excursions on the Naardermeer were full-booked. Approximately 7.000 visitors enjoyed a boat-trip to the cormorants or the duck-decoy in 2019.

8.1.3. Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)
None.

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 October 2017 we've started a monitoring research towards the European Otter in (the surroundings of) the Naardermeer, in collaboration with the Dutch Otter Research Group (CaLutra) and the province of Noord-Holland. Main goal of this research is to learn about the actual distribution and movements of the otters, related to possible threats (especially dangerous road crossings). The research will be continued till October 2020. Next to the otter research we've had the on-going monitoring of breeding birds and wintering Great White Egrets in the western part of the Naardermeer Nature Reserve. In 2018 a complete vegetation-monitoring has been carried out, which is done every 12 years. We've also started to monitor the abundance of exotic invasive Crayfish species which might have a negative impact on important habitats.

8.2.2. Scientific publications.

No scientific publications were released this year.

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

9.1. Changes in legislation or regulations.

In January 2017 the new nature legislation became active by the Wet natuurbescherming (Nature Protection Law). In a nutshell: no major changes regarding the protected status of the Naardermeer Nature Reserve. At this moment the Natura 2000 management plan, constructed by the province of Noord-Holland, is almost finished and will be published in 2020.

9.2. *Changes in ownership title (conversion to public property, rentals, etc.)*
No changes.

9.3. *Extension or transfer, new uses (for example, conversion into total reserve).*
No changes.

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.*

Several restoration actions have been realized to reduce the impact of nitrogen (so-called PAS-management actions), which included the restoration of 8 hectares peat marsh in 2018. The restoration actions improved the conditions for marsh birds and peat vegetation. Within a year the whole area was covered with reed and shallow open water. Savi's Warbler, Cetti's Warbler, Bluethroat, Reed Bunting and a variety of other breeding birds showed up in the first year. The peat marsh was used frequently by migratory waders such as Common Snipe, Jack Snipe and Common Lapwing. Great White Egret, Grey Egret, Bittern and Purple Heron have all been seen foraging. The best sighting however was an Otter, using the site to rest and fish. For 2020 a part of the Naardermeer will be dredged to remove phosphate out of the system.

10.1.2. *Protection against the elements (fire, water regime).*

The current Dephosphorization Installation, which is used for the inlet of clean water into the Naardermeer Nature Reserve in times of drought, is replaced at the beginning of 2019. This new installation removes phosphates out of the water to make sure the right conditions for underwater vegetation are available.

10.1.3. *Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)*
No changes.

10.1.4. *Field equipment (hides and study facilities).*
No changes.

10.1.5. *Waste management.*
No changes.

10.1.6. *Use of renewable energy systems*.
No changes.

10.2. Management
10.2.1. Administrative department: changes made.
No changes.

10.2.2. Wardens' department: changes made.
No changes

10.2.3. Internal policing measures.
No changes.

10.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action.
No changes.

11. Influence of the award of the European Diploma of Protected Areas
Due to the European Diploma both the Regional Water Authority and Natuurmonumenten were very aware of the necessity for a new dephosphorization installation. Both parties, along with the local and regional governments, have agreed to take all the steps necessary to protect the water vegetation of the Naardermeer.