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*STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT
OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL HABITATS
(CDPE)*

Group of Specialists on Protected Areas

Strasbourg, 1 - 4 February 1993

*Wollmatinger Ried Nature Reserve
(Germany)*

RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA

Expert Report

by

*Prof Dr E KUIJKEN
(Belgium)*

A member of the Secretariat accompanied the expert on his visit. His comments appear in point VI.

Appendix I contains Resolution (88) 6 adopted at the time of the last renewal ; in Appendix II, the Secretariat submits a draft Resolution with a view to a possible renewal in 1993.

I. Introduction

On behalf of the Council of Europe, we have been asked to report as an independent expert on the renewal of the European Diploma for the Wollmatinger Ried Nature Reserve.

The on-the-spot appraisal took place from the evening of 29.06.92 until 02.07.92. We were accompanied by Mme. M.A. l'Hyver-Yésou of the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg).

During our stay at Konstanz and the visits to the reserve, we had several meetings with the following representatives :

Mrs. Paulus, Bundesumweltministerium Bonn
Mr. H. Henke, BFANL Bonn
Mrs. Bloss & Mr. von Witzleben, RP Freiburg
Mr. Engelke BNL Freiburg
Mr. Homburg Stadt Konstanz
Mr. Förster, Landratsamt Konstanz
Mr. Jacoby & Mr. Körner, Naturschutzbund Deutschland.

Several documents and publications were put at our disposal and commented on by the above mentioned persons. This information during the introductory meetings of 29.06 and 30.06 were very important to get a general impression of the functioning and problems of the reserve.

The visits to the reserve were very well organised, both the boat trip (30.06) as well as the walk in the most representative parts of the terrestrial habitats (01.07).

The final discussion with the German authorities was held at the Naturschutz centrum in Reichenau (01.07).

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to all persons mentioned who ensured that our stay was both instructive and well organised; special thanks to Mr. Förster and the very dynamic and enthusiastic manager of the reserve, Mr. H. Jacoby.

As requested by the Council of Europe, we had an additional very encouraging meeting and a boat trip to the reserve with the following members of the Swiss authorities in Ermatingen (02.07) :

Mr. H.J. Blankenhorn, OFEFP chasse et gibier, Bern
Mr. J. Schenker, BUWAL, Urwyler
Mr. R. Urwyks, Maire of Ermatingen
Mr. P. Gruber, Kantonsforstmeister, Frauenfeld
Mr. K. Egloff, Inspector of fisheries, Ermatingen
Mr. Förster, LRA Konstanz.

Furthermore we should also like to thank all those who were prepared to give detailed information on the status and management of the Swiss part of the area. This has been designated as a wetland of international importance, especially as a waterfowl habitat (Ramsar Convention)

II. Terms of reference

It is worth mentioning that the annual reports 1987-1991 published by the DBN give full details and instructive overviews of all aspects concerning the area that are of importance for nature conservation.

1. Environmental conditions of the area

The environmental changes resulting from both natural or anthropic influences have been mentioned in the annual reports and were commented on during the field visit.

- Change in water-levels from a series of dry seasons to periods with higher floods are part of the natural dynamics of the Rhine system; three successive years, however, show a distinct lowering of the mean water-level. So far this does not seem to have had irreversible effects.
- Changes in water quality are to be mentioned, notably a decrease in the concentration of total phosphorus in the Bodensee.
- As to the purification station and the effluent canal crossing the reserve, there is still a major risk of eutrophication of the adjacent habitats that are of important ecological value. Plans exist to raise some parts of the dikes along the canal with ca. 60 cm in order to prevent flooding.

2. Flora and fauna : studies and conservation

- (1) Flora and vegetation are carefully studied (see results of observations in permanent plots, population trends of endangered species etc.). Annual reports and scientific publications prove that there are no specific threats and that most problems can be solved. Several "red list" species and types of very rare vegetations (especially some "grassland"-communities) survive in good condition, thanks to the ecologically sound nature management (mowing, cutting etc.). In this respect, the team led by Mr. H.Jacoby deserves our congratulations for the excellent results of botanical management. Some specific projects to improve the ecological situation within the reserve have been discussed (see further).

Illegal burning of reedbeds locally occur in some years, but recovery after a period of 3-4 growing seasons has been reported.

Some habitats of rare species have their optimum development just outside of the actual perimeter of protected sites (e.g. *Myosotis rehsteineri* at Hegne). It is recommended to investigate possibilities to take supplementary protective measures.

- (2) The fauna, especially birdlife has been subject of both intensive research (including monitoring) and preservation in practice. Efforts have been continuously increased in order to reduce disturbance of the large numbers of migrating and wintering waterbirds, thus safeguarding the international importance of the reserve (also a Ramsar-site).

Problems that still have not been fully resolved are water recreation, some hunting and fisheries (see further).

Also breeding birds, among them about 20 rare or endangered species benefit from the large area that has a protection status. Specific management efforts such as the installation of breeding platforms for terns proved to be very efficient.

Other fauna elements studied are Amphibians and Reptiles, as well as several groups of invertebrates.

It could be of practical importance to pay more attention to applied limnological studies, in order to assess the carrying capacity of the lake area as a food resource for large bird concentrations. Especially ecological studies on fish populations (also non commercial species) could be encouraged and summarised in the annual reports (data for the Untersee merit priority).

- (3) Landscape ecological relations between the nature reserve and the changing land use in the surroundings could be of importance to prevent negative effects on vulnerable habitats.

3. Hunting and fisheries

The improvement to hunting regulations has continued. As for terrestrial shooting, almost satisfactory solutions have been worked out in the diploma area. There are still some individual permissions, one of them with an observation and hunting post ("Hoch sitz") and feeding places in a highly vulnerable part of the reserve itself (Reichenau).

Especially the restriction of waterfowl shooting since January 1991 at the Swiss side of the lake (designated as Ramsar site as well) has proved to be very effective, although still some hunting rights for 6 or 7 farmers or landowners exist from the (Swiss) shore. Our discussion with the Swiss authorities made clear that local people of the Kanton Thurgau do not seem to be in favour of further restrictions at this moment. As far as we could state, this remains a rather limited problem that after some years will disappear or could be solved under the Ramsar regulations.

The practice of some fisheries still causes some important disturbance in the Wollmatinger Ried Reserve. The regulation "Untersee fisherei Ordnung" has to be further discussed between German and Swiss authorities in order to avoid excessive exploitation by fishermen from Ermatingen. Almost daily disturbance (control of nets) is especially harmful in the shallow inlet along the Langenrain island where breeding platforms are situated and many waterfowl concentrate. It is to be recommended that a zonation plan be designed where penetration of smaller canals into the reedbeds is prohibited also for fisheries (as it is for recreation). A minimum distance of 50 m from the reedbeds could be imposed.

Fishing along the Reichenauer Damm is less disturbing, but must be restricted as well; this seems to be acceptable for the Reichenau people concerned.

Most important for the maintainance of waterbird concentrations on the lake (resting and feeding habitat) is the regulation and control of water recreation (see further).

4. Lake and surrounding landscape conservation

In this paragraph, we discuss land use and recreation planning and related conflicts with nature conservation.

Although the landscape of the Bodensee and the nature reserve itself is well known and preserved, some adjacent land is subject to changes that are not in favour of nature conservation.

- (1) Motorway B 33 : a final decision has not yet been taken, but transformation to 2 x 2 lanes following the actual tracé is still under consideration. If this work is really necessary, it can only be accepted on the condition that no supplementary grounds are occupied in the protected area and that no large traffic junction is constructed near the reserve (Reichenau). Secondary effects of the enlarged road must be minimized e.g. by creation of passages (tunnels) for Amphibians and other animals.

The adjacent agricultural fields are to be transformed into a (wooded) buffer area between the B 33 and the reserve.

- (2) Further industrial or urban developments along the B 33 must be restricted in order to maintain an attractive landscape surrounding the reserve in the north.

Especially south of the B 33 and West of the purification plant a still very attractive agricultural buffer area has to be saved from urban-industrial expansion. It is highly recommended to include this area with mainly semi-natural grasslands into the nature reserve (via buying up or management agreements).

- (3) Zonation of active recreation centres

Our visit to the camping site Hegne taught us that several problems have still not been fully resolved.

- parking area expanding in protected species rich grasslands, adjacent to the main entrance : restoration is urgently needed
- no clear indication of the reserve boundary east of the camping site
- no specific warning for surfers and boats starting from here not to turn left and cross the (almost invisible) boundary of the zone closed for recreation; the first few hundred meters starting from the shore have to be fenced by a floating chain and bouy system
- special attention is needed for the vulnerable vegetation along the shore of this camping site with several rare plant species

We have been informed about increasing information and nature education efforts made by the exploiter. This must be strongly encouraged and even imposed in order to reduce the negative effects of this spot.

It is still to be considered if no alternative location for this camping site (including beach) could be established at a greater distance from the reserve (see recommendation 1988). As an alternative, further curtailing of the open season at this camping could have positive results on birdlife.

Further plans to reduce recreational activities during the winter at Gnadensee merit our support.

Unfortunately, the Schoppfeler problems (private gardens) have not yet been resolved, because expropriation is not possible.

(4) Water recreation

The highly positive effects of prohibiting water recreation in a large part of the Ermatinger Bay and the Gnadensee has been proved for many years by the increasing waterbird populations. Nevertheless, frequent disturbances still occur as a result of the way in which the boundaries are marked. It is strongly recommended to use permanent constructions at visible distances from each other, rather than the actual buoys that only are seasonal. One argument to have permanent "signposts" is that the recreation seasons in the whole of Europe are gradually starting earlier and lasting longer, thus conflicting with concentrations of migrating and wintering waterbirds.

In the direct surroundings of reedbeds and shores, floating chains and buoys are needed to prohibit entrance (e.g. Hegne, Reichenauer Damm) especially when people easily reach the shore or where predominant wind directions blow unskilled surfers into the reserve.

(5) Hunting and fisheries (see above under fauna)

5. Administration, education and management

- (1) In 1990 the new and most attractive visitors centre in the former railway station of Reichenau was opened to the public. The permanent exhibition is an excellent example of how the public can be informed of the conservation value of a nature reserve. This centre will function as a new Naturmuseum and will be a very stimulating meeting place for students and researchers as well as for the organisation of seminars. The former building near the purification plant is still used as a starting point for guided visits and for hosting collaborators.

In order to reduce the pressure of visitors to the reserve and to inform them of typical wild plants present, an artificial nature garden near the new centre has been created. Possibilities exist for a larger area (30 ha ?) adjacent to the B 33 at Reichenau to be developed as an ecological instruction zone for nature education adjacent to the B 33 at Reichenau, with ponds, marshes and other types of biotopes occurring in the reserve.

Vandalism and unauthorised access to the reserve is not a real problem, thanks to the frequent and active presence of supervisors, researchers etc. in the field.

The actual board walk and nature trail to the observation platform is an important and attractive tool for education without serious disturbance to the wildlife.

- (2) The personnel to run the educational efforts and to realise nature management and control in the field has increased during the last few years from 4 to almost 15, including 9 "objecteurs de conscience". Budgets for the project have been adapted in a similar way.

Guided visits have been organised and \pm 5000 visitors have been registered annually. Thus, recommendation nr. 2 of 1988 has had a very positive follow up. (The Nature Museum in Konstanz has not been visited during our stay).

- (3) Budgets : no real financial problems seem to be expected any more, with \pm 1.500.000 DM budget. (75 % Federal, 15 % Konstanz, 10 % DBN). Also for research, good possibilities exist, a.o. by a Sandoz-sponsoring.
- (4) Purchase of land : only very little progress is made in acquiring more land from private owners, but every opportunity is investigated indeed to increase governmental control of the area (50.000 DM/yr). Expropriation is not possible (see Schoppflfen-problem). Thus, recommendation nr. 1 of 1988 still stands.
- (5) Management plan

Based upon numerous scientific data and publications, a detailed and most valuable "Management and development plan" has been set up in 1991/92.

A number of very detailed maps (1/2500) give useful information on vegetation, recreation impact, land use problems, fisheries regulation, etc. Also proposals for short term and long term management are given. We congratulate the responsible authorities for the high standard of this document.

- One example discussed in the field is the realisation of "green bridges" 100 m wide each crossing the outlet canal of the purification plant. In this way both parts of the reserve could be connected again to ease the crossing of several types of organisms. This plan merits our support (although purification of the water has the same or even higher priority).
- Another example are the changes in land use proposed for fertilised grasslands (20 ha in the eastern part, used by private owners); a.o. export possibilities of hay to Switzerland determines the costs of management.
- Other potentialities to improve the function of the reserve in winter is an expansion of the winter boundary where all boating is forbidden (except the Rhine-canal itself); however, this has to be decided by three countries!). Also an earlier start of the closed season for waterrecreation and a later end (e.g. from the end of September until 15th of April) should be in favour of the internationally important waterbird concentrations.

III. Renewal of the European Diploma

We strongly recommend that the Diploma for the Wollmatinger Ried be renewed in category A for the next five year period.

Although some problems remain unsolved and recommendations of 1988 on those points still partly hold, we have been impressed by the progress of conservation measures and the establishment of the new visitors centre. This illustrates the commitment of both the authorities of different levels and the managing society DBN, represented by the very efficient and devoted staff that we congratulate for the positive results. We also congratulate the Swiss authorities for the designation of the Ermatinger part of the area as a Ramsar site and for the reduction of waterfowl shooting as a result of the referendum in the canton of Thurgau.

Following recommendations could be taken into account for the next period of five years:

1. Further research into the ecology of the nature reserve and the surrounding environment could be broadened by including applied limnological studies (e.g. non-commercial fish populations carrying capacity for waterbirds) and landscape ecological relations (including eco-hydrology) with effects of changing land use on conservation values.
2. Disturbance by commercial fishermen entering some inlets between reedbeds of the reserve has to be further reduced (e.g. by imposing minimum distance of 50 m from the reedbeds to be respected).
3. If the B 33 motorway is to be rebuilt and broadened, a number of mitigating measures are to be taken to reduce negative effects on the reserve to an acceptable minimum (e.g. including a buffer-zone).
4. Urban-industrial development in a Westward direction along the B 33 is to be restricted.
5. Further improvement of preventive measures to reduce negative effects of recreation:
 - Hegne camping site : restoration of habitats illegally used as a parking
 - permanent indication of the boundaries of the inaccessible parts of the Lake by fences (e.g. floating chain and buoy systems)
 - further curtailing of open seasons for water recreation.
6. Solutions to reduce pollution from the canal with effluent from the sewage treatment plant have to be found; the construction of "green bridges" is to be recommended in order to increase connectivity between the two main parts of the reserve for terrestrial organisms.

IV Comments by the Secretariat

The Secretariat is fully in agreement with the above report prepared by M. KUIJKEN and only wishes to provide some additional information on the following points:

1. Hunting

On the German side, limited hunting for mammals is allowed (mainly roe, deer and foxes). On the Swiss side, the situation has been greatly improved and these results should be recognised. Mr ANTONIETTI (Office Fédéral de l'Environnement et des Paysages) informed us by letter of 2 March 1992 that "most of Ermatinger Becken on the Swiss territory has been declared a reserve for wildfowl and migratory birds of international importance in accordance with the federal ordonnance of 21 January 1991 ... in this section of territory hunting is now forbidden There still remains a small part of this wetland, to the West (Agerstenbach Ermatingen) where hunting from the bank is still allowed. We share the idea that also this area should be free from hunting but this is a mid-term aim. [see map in appendix 7].

2. Other disturbance sources

It should be said that presently boat traffic, outside recreation and fishing probably represent even more serious sources of disturbance than hunting. Boat traffic, which is rather heavy in the narrow channel, can be a cause of disturbance as is illegal entrance in the reserve which may be made easy by the lack of buoys or an inadequate fence system on the borders of the reserve.

Fishing is authorised everywhere for the few local commercial fishermen. The main cause of disturbance is when they enter channels in between reedbeds close to tern colonies. This is supposed to be done at a limited boat speed and a limited number of times a day. The Swiss authorities keep a close watch to enforce implementation of these regulations so that this cause of disturbance should be resolved in the near future.

3. We believe that it would be worth strengthening the dialogue with the owners and the customers of the Hegne camping site. Leaflets explaining restrictions in the reserve have already been handed out. A further step could be to put up in the camp site boards explaining and showing the role, the richness, the regulations of the reserve as well as authorized access conditions for guided tours. The European Diploma and the international value of the site should also be stressed.

Furthermore, on the Swiss side and in co-operation with the local Swiss authorities, it would be worthwhile disseminating information and organising campaigns to increase public awareness. This action should give full recognition to the efforts made on both sides of the Rhine to protect and value this very important and internationally recognized area. M. Föister who was present during the discussions with the Swiss authorities on 2 July 1992 appeared to be in favour of such initiatives.

Finally it is worth underlining that Sandoz Rhein Fonds financed a very important and useful study for the Nature Reserve on the distribution and movements of the water birds in

the whole area. This should help identify key spots and key factors for the ecology of the avifauna during its stay in this area.

In conclusion, in accordance with M KUIJKEN we propose to renew the Diploma in category A with the recommendations appearing in the following appendix.

APPENDIX I

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS**

RESOLUTION (88) 6

**ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA
AWARDED TO WOLLMATINGER RIED NATURE RESERVE
(FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY)**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 June 1988
at the 418th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma;

Having regard to Resolution (68) 34 awarding the European Diploma to Wollmatinger Ried Nature Reserve;

Having regard to the proposals of the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and Natural Habitats (CDPE),

Renews the European Diploma, Category A, awarded to Wollmatinger Ried Nature Reserve until 28 November 1993, subject to the following recommendations:

1. The authorities' policy of buying up meadows must continue without fail and, if possible, be intensified;

The Constance Natural History Museum should have an educationist/biologist allocated to it, in order to exploit its resources and develop educational activities;

3. The use of sailboards should be prohibited in the region of Hegne and the camping site moved, if possible;

4. When the motorway along the northern boundary of the reserve comes to be constructed, as is probable, the impact of future traffic on the reserve should be minimised by imposing a speed-limit and excluding the possibility of any exits near the protected area.

APPENDIX II

Resolution (93)

**ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA
AWARDED TO WOLLMATINGER RIED NATURE RESERVE
(FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY)**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 June 1988
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The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma ;

Having regard to Resolution (68) 34 awarding the European Diploma to Wollmatinger Ried Nature Reserve ;

Having regard to the proposals of the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and Natural Habitats (CDPE),

Renews the European Diploma, Category A, awarded to Wollmatinger Ried Nature Reserve until 28 November 1998, subject to the following recommendations :

- 1. The negative effects of recreation should be reduced through improvement of preventive measures especially by :*
 - i. the restoration of habitats illegally used as parking at the Hegne camping site;*
 - ii. permanent indication of the boundaries of the inaccessible parts of the Lake by fences (eg floating chains and buoys system) ;*
 - iii. curtailing of open season for water recreation ;*
- 2. Risk of pollution from the canal from the sewage treatment plant should be eliminated and "green bridges" over the canal should be constructed in order to increase ecological connection of the two main parts of the reserve for terrestrial organisms ;*
- 3. The disturbance by commercial fishermen entering inlets between reedbeds should be further reduced ;*
- 4. Urbanisation and industrialisation westward along the B33 motorway should be strictly restricted and if the B33 motorway is to be rebuilt and broadened, compensating measures should be taken to reduce the negative effects on the reserve to an acceptable minimum, including through the creation of a buffer-zone ;*

5. *The authorities' policy of buying up meadows must continue without fail and, if possible, be intensified. Moreover, they should look into the possibility of taking further measures to protect valuable habitats which border on the Nature Reserve ;*

6. *Further research into the ecology of the Nature Reserve and its surroundings should include applied limnological studies and investigation into the impact of potential land use changes on the hydrology and ecology of the Nature Reserve ;*

7. *When dealing with the control of recreational activities, illegal entrance and the enforcement of fishing regulations, information and public awareness campaigns should be stepped up to convey the message of pride and respect for this internationally recognised nature conservation area, especially on the borders of the reserve, at Hegne camping site and, if possible, on the Swiss side of the Rhine.*

APPENDIX III

Map 1:25 cm of Ermatingen Becken

Dessiné avec le système, ARC/INFO, avec les inventaires suivants :

- *Flachmoore national = inventaire des bas-marais, version de la consultation pour les objets d'importance nationale, (entrée en vigueur 1993)*
- *Flachmoore regional = plusieurs objets d'importance régionale ou locale déjà inventorisés*
- *Wasservogelreservate = Réserves d'oiseaux d'eau et de migrateurs, l'inventaire est en vigueur (ordonnance du 21 janvier 1991).*
- *BLN-Inventar = Inventaire des paysages, sites et monuments naturels, en vigueur (ordonnance du 10 août 1977, 2ème série du 19 décembre 1983)*
- *Amphibien = Sites de reproduction des batraciens, la réalisation de l'inventaire est prévue pour l'automne 1992.*






Ermatinger Becken

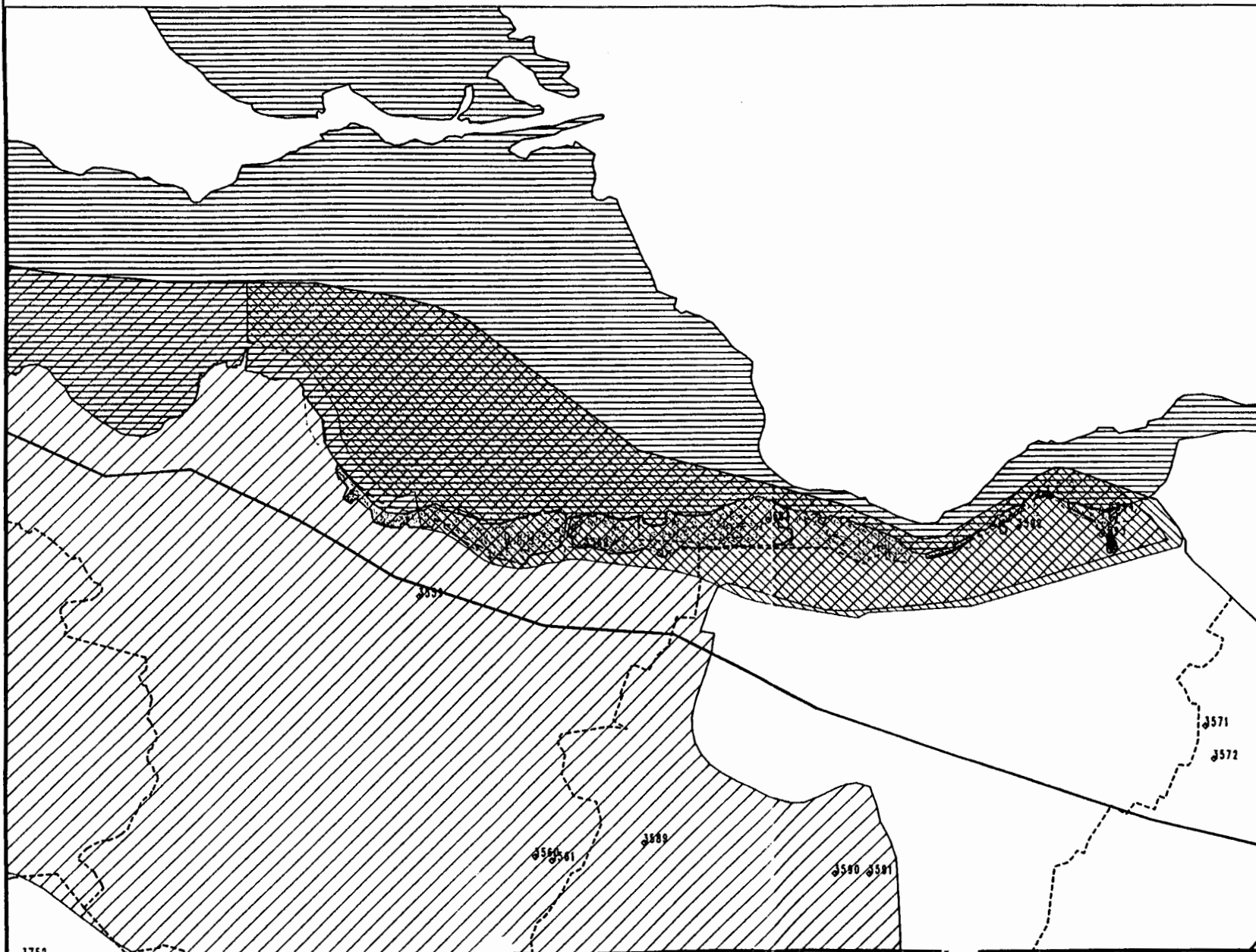
BUWAL - Hauptabteilung Natur und Landschaft

(Projekt: ER)






Inventare

06-JUL-1992

-  Flachmoore national
-  Flachmoore regional
-  Wasservogelreservate
-  BLN-Inventar
-  Amphibien



Geographische Situation

-  Autobahnen
-  Hauptstrassen
-  Gemeindegrenzen
-  Kantonsgrenzen
-  Seen

 Objektstandort
Massstab 1:25000

