

Warsaw Wetlands Declaration

adopted on the World Wetlands Day 2nd of February 2010 in Warsaw

by the participants of the conference

Wetlands aLive

LIFE Nature projects in biodiversity conservation with special focus on Central Europe

Taking into account that,

- (1) wetland ecosystems play vital environmental and societal roles for the European communities; in particular recognising
 - that wetlands are major hotspots of biological diversity;
 - that wetlands, and especially peatlands, play an important role in the regulation of the global climate as the largest continental stock of organic carbon;
 - the essential role that wetlands play in regulating the regional hydrology and the cycling of nutrients,
 - that wetlands are essential elements of the Central European landscapes,
- (2) over 90% wetlands of Central Europe have been degraded and lost part of their primary functions, leading to large-scale environmental and economical losses,
- (3) the ecological status of CE wetlands is still better than in some other parts of the continent, especially with respect to
 - the presence of the last remnants of natural wetland ecosystems,
 - the presence of well-developed semi-natural wetlands as part of the cultural heritage, developed over centuries of low-intensity agricultural management,

116 participants of the conference *Wetlands aLive*, representing nature conservation organisations, administration and scientists from 12 countries, after having discussed current problems and challenges of wetland conservation and restoration, came to the following, commonly shared conclusions:

I In Central Europe LIFE-Nature is a major instrument for wetland conservation and restoration, both for funding practical measures and knowledge exchange and networking.

II Conservation and restoration of CE wetlands has to remain in the focus of European nature conservation policy. However, given the difficulties to fully restore degraded ecosystems, conservation of the last remaining naturally functioning wetlands is of utmost importance.

III The saving of the Rospuda Valley Mire, one of the last well-preserved percolation mires in the European Union, is an example of long-term conservation vision winning over short-term political and economical interests. This achievement was only possible through the cooperation of many parties. Therefore, we wish to express our gratitude to those, who contributed to this success, to specifically mention:

- the European Commission, taking legal steps timely and being in place to respond for the societal request,
- the Polish government and the Minister of Environment,
- the Polish and the international societies.

IV Notwithstanding the above, serious efforts have to be taken to restore now degraded wetlands towards services of vital importance for the society. This includes: climate change mitigation, water retention capacity, nutrient buffering and biodiversity conservation.

V Agriculturally-managed wetland systems are to be conserved and restored for the joint benefit of biological and cultural heritage. We acknowledge the role of Agri-environmental Programmes in sustaining rural wetland biodiversity but require that the ecological effectiveness of these schemes is evaluated on the sound scientific basis.

VI Life projects are typically targeted at obtaining long-term effects on ecosystem conditions but monitoring schemes do not fit in this reality. In selected cases the EC should allow for allocating sufficient resources for extended monitoring of the results.