
Briefing Note: European Wetland Management Workshop

This note summarises the recent IWRM-Net workshop that brought together wetlands scientists, regulators and managers to discuss knowledge gaps relating to the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive. The event also aimed to identify areas for improvement in collaboration between the WFD and the RAMSAR Convention.

It is intended for: All those interested in the management of wetlands including scientists, policy makers, regulators and managers.

Background

IWRM.Net is an EU Coordinating Action on a European-wide exchange network for collaboration of research efforts on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). Its aim is to develop long-term coordination among national and regional IWRM related research programmes at the European scale. The policy driver is based on the fact that IWRM is among today's core environmental policies in all European countries that have transposed the Water Framework Directive (WFD -Directive 2000/60/CE) into their national legislation. Since the beginning of the 2000's, this Directive has induced water managers and policy makers to develop entirely new approaches and operational modes, thus triggering the renewal of research demands.

In the investigation of research needs for the second IWRM-net call for research proposals, certain common issues were identified but not taken forward as part of the call. Wetlands was one of these issues and following identification of a group of interested individuals around Europe, SNIFFER set up and organized a recent workshop in Gland, Switzerland. The event was hosted by the RAMSAR Convention Secretariat and brought together 20 representatives of 14 countries across Europe to discuss knowledge gaps.

Specific questions related to the knowledge requirements delegates have identified as a result of the experience of the first round of river basin planning, and the research they are planning to take forward to support the second round of river basin planning were asked of the delegates. The questions were designed to facilitate a sharing of experience and knowledge with the aim being to bring interested partners together to develop a collaborative research project or programme in the near future. IWRM-net is also looking to test mechanisms for presenting and managing research needs to the funding bodies in order to make the process of collaboration easier in the future.



The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

The Secretariat hosted the meeting to investigate links and common areas of interest between the RAMSAR Convention and the EU Water Framework Directive.

Key message

The network of wetland experts have immediate needs to exchange knowledge on common challenges under the WFD and envisage by sharing information and collaboration there can be cost-efficiencies in research and Europe can be at the forefront of integrated wetlands management worldwide.

Headline research needs:

1. Conceptual modelling

Currently the models are not very clear or easy to use for wetlands managers. To improve the situation the task of identifying the functional water supply linkages within wetlands was considered the important first step. Then the conceptual modelling and linking of hydrological, ecological, surface and subsurface models should be done. Building on the RAMSAR guidance the work should also find ways of monitoring and identifying the linkages on a widespread basis and lead to sound models used by European Wetland Managers.

2. Improving governance and management

The issue of education, awareness-raising, stakeholder engagement should be considered with wetland managers improving the management in Europe and providing tools and guidance for wetlands. Engagement with a wider audience was considered the next stage. Alongside this is economic assessment and ecosystem service valuation. The need is to improve the ability of wetland managers to highlight the benefits of the wetlands in the planning and management process, showing aspects such as climate change, water re-use and flood alleviation.

3. Harmonising wetland typologies

This was seen as important to produce a functional ecoregion-based understanding across Europe with an interoperable platform to share data.

4. Optimal monitoring strategies

Many countries are already monitoring wetlands but there was a real gap in strategic and effective monitoring and sharing experience and capacity across Europe could improve this. Full monitoring of wetlands was seen as

prohibitively expensive but collaboration and use of techniques such as remote sensing and developing the right scales for analysis could optimise the methodologies.

5. Defining significant damage and reference conditions.

At the moment wetland change is monitored but not wetland damage. The managers want to be able to set baseline conditions and then understand how much damage is occurring to the wetland, how and why. Here the incorporation of historic data needs to be managed and to improve the understanding of what is significant.

6. Qualitative and Quantitative criteria

Here the questions were about defining types and thresholds that are functionally based. The group wanted immediate broad-scale answers quickly to be refined later. The group aim to investigate the optimum conditions for ecology, identify where they exist and the impact of environmental variability on the conditions

Next Steps

IWRM-Net will continue to host the project website and interactive forum to allow the delegates to collaborate. The issues will be presented to the IWRM-net partners so that they can consider possible funding mechanisms and opportunities. Even without guaranteed funding the delegates have identified future workshops and meetings where the group can assess progress on these issues.

Further Information

Copies of the workshop proceedings and a strategic issues paper which provides more detail are available from;

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