



Pact for Wetlands 2025, Poznań

Conference Declaration

On the 3rd – 5th of February 2025, on the occasion of the 54th anniversary of the Ramsar Convention signing, the Faculty of Archaeology of the Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, brought together more than 360 people who are professionally and privately concerned with wetland conservation in its broadest sense. Conference participants represented a range of institutions and organizations, including universities and other scientific institutions (e.g., Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poznań University of Life Sciences, University of Warsaw, Jagiellonian University, University of Gdańsk, Poznań University of Technology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Szczecin University), public administration (e.g., the Ministry of Climate, the General Directorate for Environmental Protection, the Institute of Meteorology and Water Management, the State Water Management Authority “Wody Polskie”, the State Forests, the Bureau for Forest Management and Geodesy, National and Landscape Parks, Heritage Protection Service, environmental protection administration units), foundations and non-governmental organizations (e.g., the Polish Society for the Protection of Birds, the Centre for Wetland Protection). 84 talks were delivered during the meeting, and 39 posters were presented. In addition, there were also two panel discussions on wetland conservation, restoration and the challenges of water management within the climate crisis, as well as countless informal polemics and discussions behind the scenes.

As part of the joint conference declaration, delegates adopted the following statement:

As the Ramsar Convention defines, wetland ecosystems encompass a wide range of wetland habitats such as peatlands, marshes, lakes, rivers or saline wetlands, permanent or intermittent waters, and natural or artificial reservoirs. These ecosystems are key elements of nature whose proper functioning is crucial to slow down the progressive anthropogenic global climate change and offsetting the increasingly observed extreme and catastrophic events. Protecting and restoring these ecosystems is, therefore, our common responsibility. This is particularly important as many wetlands have been degraded and many species of fauna and flora typical of different types of wetlands in Poland are threatened with extinction and are included in the Polish Red Lists and Books. Recent scientific studies show that as much as 25% of European peatlands have been degraded, including 50% of peatlands in the European Union (Tanneberger et al., 2021), and as much as 85% of peatlands in Poland (Jabłońska et al., 2021). This means that these vast areas have become emitters rather than sinks of carbon dioxide. The condition of lakes or (mostly

regulated) watercourses is neither good, as we can observe through the increasingly frequent media coverage of algal blooms or fish poisoning in the waters.

Protecting wetlands requires the cooperation of various communities – from state and EU administrations to scientific institutions associations and foundations. Creating appropriate conservation plans for these diverse ecosystems requires scientific and technical expertise, as well as legal support and financial resources. These are investments that are essential for the protection and restoration of wetlands, the protection of water resources and water quality, the prevention of droughts and biodiversity decline, the protection against progressive climate change and, as is increasingly emphasized by many institutions and experts, the improvement of the country's defense strategy.

Furthermore, peatlands of various types represent some of the best archaeological, historical and palaeoecological archives. Thanks to their properties – the maintenance of anaerobic conditions and appropriate wetness of the peat layers accumulated over thousands of years – they are a unique reservoir of perfectly preserved artefacts and, thus, the key to reconstructing and understanding our past and ancestors' relationship with nature. After all, it is in the peat that the cultural heritage and history of our lands have been written, from the first farmers seven thousand years ago, through the embankments of Biskupin buried in the peat, the beginnings of the state of Mieszko and his successors up to the present day. Protecting wetlands is, therefore, a patriotic act, allowing both the protection of historical memory and our identity and the preservation of nature for future generations with the idea that the past is today.

In this declaration, as participants of the Pact for Wetlands 2025 conference in Poznań, we would like to emphasize the need to work together for the protection of wetlands and, expanding on the demands of the Pact for Wetlands 2023 conference in Warsaw, we propose the implementation of the following actions:

1. Recognition of the protection and restoration of wetlands as key actions for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change and to halt species extinction, and implementation of adequate actions in different sectors of State policy,
2. Cooperation between scientists from different fields and scientific disciplines in the planning and implementation of the protection and restoration of wetlands, as well as the establishment of a system for monitoring their ecological state and assessing ecosystem services,
3. Cooperation between public administration institutions and scientists and conservation practitioners to improve existing and develop new effective legal, administrative and financial instruments to support wetland nature,
4. Create a legal and organizational framework to support the involvement of the private sector in wetland restoration and, in particular, the restoration of degraded peatlands as part of offsetting greenhouse gas emissions,
5. Develop new principles for the management of peat soils in the agricultural and forestry sectors, such as paludiculture, to minimize greenhouse gas emissions and restore lost ecosystem services such as water retention and purification,
6. Limit peat extraction and use in horticulture, nursery and other sectors,

7. Revise the current approach to formal wetland protection in protected areas to make it more effective and prevent erroneous administrative decisions,
8. Extend effective protection to well-preserved wetlands and develop and implement a national natural restoration plan for degraded wetlands to restore nature and restore lost ecosystem services, including strategic functions for national defense,
9. Effective and widespread education of the public on the role of wetlands in nature and our lives, as well as on the needs and methods for their restoration,
10. Strengthened international cooperation of Polish scientists, practitioners and decision-makers in the field of wetland protection and restoration, in particular in the protection of transboundary wetlands such as the Belarusian-Ukrainian-Polish Polesie region,
11. Recognize peatlands as areas of national importance and undertake the protection of peat as an important historical and archaeological archive,
12. Making the recognition of peatland carbon resources and the carrying out of palaeoecological and archaeological research mandatory as a standard for the recognition of the ecological status of wetlands in the creation of protected areas,
13. Adequate recognition of the condition and occurrence of wetlands in towns and cities and their effective protection,
14. Undertake broad international cooperation for the restoration and protection of wetlands, particularly in transboundary wetlands such as the peatlands of the Polesie, Podlasie or the Carpathians, as well as border rivers such as the Oder.

Poznań, February 4th 2025