



# **The WFD and water scarcity and droughts**

A perspective from an  
environmental NGO

Phil Burston  
Senior Water Policy Officer  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK)



# Content

- What the WFD can do to tackle Water scarcity and drought
- Vulnerability versus resilience
- How are River Basin Management Plans addressing scarcity and drought?
- Looking forward



# WFD = tackling WSD

Key elements of the WFD that **should** help deal with water scarcity and droughts:

- Ecological objectives to ensure ecosystems continue to function and deliver/store water.
- Taking a basin approach, considering **all** pressures, **all** hydrological and climatic conditions and the needs of related ecosystems.
- Increased transparency and improved public participation in decision making.
- Measures to control abstraction from both surface and groundwater.



# WFD = tackling WSD (2)

- Compulsory water pricing should help the pursuit of water efficiency.
- Establish environmental flows and ensure sustainable water allocation.
- Preventing pollution of both surface and groundwater (safeguarding existing water supplies).
- Promoting policy integration with the agriculture and energy sectors



# Vulnerability versus resilience

- The way we manage and use our water in Europe is already increasing our vulnerability to drought and water scarcity
- Climate change means more uncertainty about how much water we will have though generally we will see more frequent droughts and aridity will spread
- In such a context to plan for continuing overconsumption and degradation of water resources is madness and makes society and our environment more vulnerable.
- Resilience can be developed by aligning water consumption with environmental limits: managing demand and tackling leakage - not automatically thinking of increasing supply.



# Water Framework Directive

## Positives:

- The WFD set in motion a major and ambitious water reform process.
- Where the Directive sets clear obligations problems are being tackled, e.g. falling groundwater levels (though not in Spain).

## BUT

- Completely unclear what this process is actually going to deliver.
- A worrying north-south divide of delivery and action is emerging in Europe.
- Most countries still fail to share the costs of water provision and pollution control services among all users.
  - agriculture is still getting a largely free ride almost everywhere.



# How are RBMPs addressing scarcity and drought?

- Few RBMP's have defined water saving objectives, whether general or sector specific.
- 'Business as usual' is still prevalent.
- Potential of drought planning, water efficiency and demand management to help reach good status is not being realised.
- Links between water quality, land use and water resources management are not being made.
- The role of the natural environment and the protected area network in water management is not being recognised or protected.



# A look forward

- The WFD **is** the flexible instrument available **now** to help Europe address water scarcity and drought
- We need to look to international best practice to improve water management measures in RBMPs
- If new EU instruments are necessary it is only to support meeting WFD objectives – for example water efficiency labelling, standards for products and buildings, a water saving and allocation policy to ensure saved water is returned to ecosystems.

**EU's water saving potential is 40% – let's start realising it!**



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