

Updates from WaterLANDS - 14.04.23

1. Artists Announced for the WaterLANDS Artistic Engagement Residency in 2023



Image 1. Promotional image for artistic engagement residency announcement

The Horizon 2020 project WaterLANDS (Water-based Solutions for Carbon Storage, People and Wilderness) has selected seven artists (six artists or artistic collaborations) to complete a 4-year part-time placement as part of the WaterLANDS Artistic Engagement Residency.

The successful artists are Maria Nalbantova (Bulgaria), Elo Liiv (Estonia), Christine Mackey (Ireland), Claudio Beorchia (Italy), Marjolijn Dijkman (Netherlands), and Laura Harrington and Fiona MacDonald (Feral Practice) (United Kingdom). The profile for each artist can be found below.

The WaterLANDS Call for Artists invited artists to apply to work at one of the six wetland Action Sites where restoration will take place. The call received almost 500 applications of high quality and diversity. To ensure a fair selection process that was grounded in the local context, the coordinating organisation University College Dublin (UCD), and an external artistic expert worked with the local project partners at each site to conduct panel interviews and reviews to select artists or artist teams for the six sites. These artists will engage with the local community and the restoration process at the Action Sites located in Bulgaria, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

Dr Shane McGuinness, WaterLANDS Deputy Coordinator, UCD, said "Restoration brings cultural as well as ecological renewal. Through these residencies we want art to be an integral part of creating and reflecting that renewal. We were amazed and delighted to receive so many outstanding applications from all kinds of artists with excellent ideas to work with the wetland sites, restoration teams and local communities."

[Read the full article and artist profiles.](#)

2. Policy work



Image 2. Promotional image for the "For Peat's Sake" event in Brussels



Image 3. Promotional image for the "For Peat's Sake" event in Brussels

WaterLANDS Policy Briefing: Higher Ambition for Peatlands in the EU Nature Restoration Law Proposal

On 22 June 2022, the European Commission presented its long-awaited proposal for a law to restore Europe's degraded ecosystems, habitats and species. The draft law, though a positive development for European environmental policy, including on peatlands, has room for improvement.

A policy briefing drafted by WaterLANDS partners Greifswald Mire Centre and Wetlands International Europe with the support of conservationists and scientists across Europe, outlines some of these improvements and calls on decision-makers to amend the proposed targets in line with a pathway that leads to net-zero CO₂ emissions from peatlands by 2050.

[Download the policy brief here.](#)

Comments on Draft Nature Restoration Law from EU Green Deal Cluster

Five large EU-funded research projects, all operating at the science-policy interface, jointly analysed the text of the draft Nature Restoration Law. The involved projects include the four projects funded under the Green Deal (Horizon2020) Area 7 topic "Restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services", and represent 168 institutions working at the interface of environmental science, application and policy.

The recommendations in the brief result from a science-policy workshop held in Brussels on 25th November 2022 that was organised by the Research Executive Agency of the European Commission and DG R&I, and attended by the project coordinators and by representatives of EEA, JRC, DG-ENV, DG-AGRI, DG-MARE, DG-REGIO and DG-CLIMA.

The policy brief was submitted to the rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs of the EU Parliament's Environmental committee in advance of debates on the draft legislation in 2023.

WaterLANDS, along with the rest of the Green Deal Cluster, look forward to further contributing to the ambitions of the EU Biodiversity Strategy through hands-on restoration activities and the development of resources and tools, that can support mainstreaming of large-scale restoration activities in Europe.

[Read the article and download the comments.](#)

"For Peat's Sake": Brussels Nature Restoration Law Event

On 26th October 2022, Horizon 2020 project WaterLANDS and Interreg North-West Europe project Care-Peat hosted a joint event in Brussels to discuss peatland policy recommendations developed with stakeholders and to advocate for stronger peatland targets in the proposal for the new EU Nature Restoration Law. The event, attended by MEPs, Directorate-Generals, and other policy stakeholders, called for a range of new measures, including the significant increase of peatland restoration targets for 2050, and the mandatory monitoring of restoration.

While the event organisers welcome the proposed Nature Restoration Law as a positive step, including the binding targets for EU countries to restore peatland by 2030, 2040 and 2050, and the recognition of alternative modes of use for rewetted land, stronger peatland targets were advocated for, including:

- I. The restoration of peatland must include rewetting.
- II. Significant improvement of peatland restoration targets for 2050 in line with the Paris Agreement.
- III. Target all non-residential land uses of drained peatland for restoration.
- IV. Mandatory monitoring of peatland restoration.

In her keynote speech, MEP Jutta Paulus called for the improvement of the Nature Restoration Law, saying “Peatlands are some of our most valuable ecosystems, covering only 3% of Earth’s land area but storing more than 600 gigatonnes of the planet’s soil carbon, which approximately corresponds to the amount of carbon emitted by Europe since 1750. The degradation of peatlands has caused them to become carbon sources rather than sinks. The proposal for the Nature Restoration Law is Europe’s chance to champion peatlands in policy, but we must act now to strengthen the targets for a stronger Law for nature.”

[Read the full article and watch the video.](#)

3. New Research by WaterLANDS Knowledge Site Partners Explores Rural Communities as Agents of Change for Protecting Peatlands



Image 3. Sunset over the boardwalk at the Abbeyleix Bog. Property of the Abbeyleix Bog Project.

New research by Kate Flood of the Community Wetlands Forum and the Abbeyleix Bog project provides evidence of the importance of local communities and knowledge systems for the conservation of peatlands.

The paper centers around everyday resilience and explores how rural communities can act as agents of change in peatland social-ecological systems.

Community knowledge, involvement and relationships to place can serve to combat environmental, political, economic and social stresses and help to build social and ecological resilience.

The paper draws evidence from a survey, interviews and three case studies of rural community groups in the Irish midlands to provide an overview of local dynamics in

peatland conservation and wider issues of place-based development and adaptation.

[Read the article and the paper.](#)

4. Citizen Science in WaterLANDS

Citizen Science Announcement

There are plenty of exciting ways for people at home to get involved in the WaterLANDS project, with citizen science projects planned to launch in 2023 at three of the project's restoration sites in Estonia, Italy and the United Kingdom.

Citizen science can bring nature and people together. The citizen science activities within the project will explore the "re-seeing" of landscapes, aim to reinforce community ties with wetlands and help to build community support for wetland restoration.

WaterLANDS will initially focus its restoration efforts at six wetland "Action" sites across Europe, where community input and engagement will be integral to the co-creation of a new, holistic model for restoration. The three sites have vastly different contexts, and so have different community and cultural values. The citizen science activities at each site will be shaped to reflect the needs and values of the communities.

[Read the full article about the planned citizen science projects.](#)

Citizen Science update from the Venice lagoon



Images 4 and 5. Great fun was had over 3 days in early April when over 100 school children learned about the importance of Venice's salt marsh for the region as part of the WaterLANDS citizen science initiative. Photography by Eleonora Sovrani.

From Monday 3rd - Wednesday 5th April 2023, a citizen science excursion took place at the Italian WaterLANDS Action Site, the Venice lagoon.

On Monday, We are here Venice, who coordinate the restoration works and engagement at the Action Site, welcomed the first citizen science group consisting of 42 children across two classes.

By the end of Wednesday, 130 11-12 year olds from greater Venice/the Venice area attended the excursion and learned about the importance of the salt marsh for Venice and the Mediterranean region.

WahV designed a special logbook with the Venice Natural History Museum that families and other schools will be able to download from the museum website to guide independent learning and exploration.

Together with insights from other WaterLANDS sites from Milena Holgrem and Juul Limpens at Wageningen University, the children will present what they learned as part of EU Green Week on 27 May at the Museum.

[Read the article and see the photos from the excursions.](#)

5. Webinar: Peatlands 101 for Investors - introducing peatlands as a viable investment opportunity



Image 6. Promotional image for the Peatlands 101 for Investors webinar

A webinar held in March 2023 "Peatlands 101 for Investors" aimed to introduce investors to the many opportunities associated with peatland restoration, both for climate change mitigation, biodiversity preservation, and as a commercially viable investment opportunity.

A number of projects and initiatives were presented during the webinar, including the WaterLANDS project.

Investors were left with six calls to action:

- I. Do no harm through corporate engagement by assessing whether peat degradation is in your portfolios.
- II. Encourage companies to set targets and measure progress using frameworks such as SBTi FLAG, GHG Protocol or TNFD.
- III. Advocate for policies advancing the restoration of peatlands, such as restoration targets under the EU Nature Restoration Law (NRL).
- IV. Champion alternative uses for peatlands that are climate-friendly and provide viable nature based solutions.
- V. Explore finance restoration projects that restore peatlands and deliver community benefits.
- VI. Assess the WaterLANDS network and see where you can suggest tangible points of investment or collaboration.

[Download the slides here.](#)

