

Convention on Biological Diversity

Thematic Report of the Netherlands on Protected Areas

(Pursuant to Decision VI/25 of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity)

**June 2003
Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries
Department of Nature Management
The Hague, the Netherlands**

Thematic report on protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity

Please provide the following details on the origin of this report.

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Please provide summary information on the process by which this report has been prepared, including information on the types of stakeholders who have been actively involved in its preparation and on material which was used as a basis for the report.

The following policy officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries were involved in preparing the report:

Astrid Berkhout, Patricia Bode, Arnold Boer, Peter Bos, Jasper Dalhuisen, Henk Eggink, Thijs van Eijsden, Bregje van Erve, Sandra Greeuw, Erik van Haaren, Roeland Huilmand, Leonie Jansen, Jep Karres, Edo Knegtering, Marion Pelk, Hans Ponten, Jan Rietema, Astrid Schippers, Jan van Spaandonk, Andre van Straaten, Ben van der Veer, Esther Veldhuis, Tom Verboom, Paul Vetter, and Carleen Weebers.

Colleagues of the following other Dutch Ministries involved in biodiversity policy, were invited to comment on a draft version of the report:

- the Ministry of Economic Affairs;
- the Ministry of Education, Cultural Affairs and Science;
- the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- the Ministry for Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment;
- the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management.

The following stakeholders were invited to comment on a draft version of the report:

- De Landschappen [a union of 12 non-governmental organisations for nature and landscape management];
- LTO-Nederland (Agriculture and Horticulture Organizations - Netherlands);
- Nederlands Comité voor IUCN (NC-IUCN; the Netherlands Committee for IUCN; a cooperative agreement between the Dutch members of IUCN, and the Dutch members of the six international IUCN commissions);
- Staatsbosbeheer (National Forest Service);
- Vereniging Natuurmonumenten (Society for the Preservation of Nature in the Netherlands);
- Waddenvereniging (Wadden Society).

Protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity

System of protected areas

1. What is the relative priority afforded to development and implementation of a national system of protected areas in the context of other obligations arising from the Convention and COP Decisions?					
a) High	X	b) Medium		c) Low	
2. Is there a systematic planning process for development and implementation of a national system of protected areas?					
a) no					
b) in early stages of development					
c) in advanced stages of development					
d) yes, please provide copies of relevant documents describing the process					X
3. Is there an assessment of the extent to which the existing network of protected areas covers all areas that are identified as being important for the conservation of biological diversity?					
a) no					
b) an assessment is being planned for					
c) an assessment is being undertaken					
d) yes, please provide copies of the assessments made					X

Regulatory framework

4. Is there a policy framework and/or enabling legislation in place for the establishment and management of protected areas?					
a) no					
b) in early stages of development					
c) in advanced stages of development					
d) yes, please provide copies of relevant documents					X
5. Have guidelines, criteria and targets been adopted to support selection, establishment and management of protected areas?					
a) no					
b) in early stages of development					
c) in advanced stages of development					
d) yes, please provide copies of guidelines, criteria and targets					X

6. Does the management of protected areas involve the use of incentive measures, for instance, of entrance fees for park visitors, or of benefit-sharing arrangements with adjacent communities and other relevant stakeholders?	
a) no	
b) yes, incentive measures implemented for some protected areas (please provide some examples)	X
c) yes, incentive measures implemented for all protected areas (please provide some examples)	

Management approach

7. Have the principal threats to protected areas and the biodiversity that they contain been assessed, so that programmes can be put in place to deal with the threats, their effects and to influence the key drivers?	
a) no	
b) an assessment is being planned for	
c) an assessment is in process	
d) yes, an assessment has been completed	
e) programmes and policies to deal with threats are in place (please provide basic information on threats and actions taken)	X
8. Are protected areas established and managed in the context of the wider region in which they are located, taking account of and contributing to other sectoral strategies?	
a) no	
b) yes, in some areas	X
c) yes, in all areas (please provide details)	
9. Do protected areas vary in their nature, meeting a range of different management objectives and/or being operated through differing management regimes?	
a) no, most areas are established for similar objectives and are under similar management regimes	
b) many areas have similar objectives/management regimes, but there are also some exceptions	
c) yes, protected areas vary in nature (please provide details)	X
10. Is there wide stakeholder involvement in the establishment and management of protected areas?	
a) no	
b) with some, but not all protected areas	X
c) yes, always (please provide details of experience)	

11. Do protected areas established and managed by non-government bodies, citizen groups, private sector and individuals exist in your country, and are they recognized in any formal manner?	
a) no, they do not exist	
b) yes, they exist, however are not formally recognized	X
c) yes, they exist and are formally recognized (please provide further information)	X

Available resources

12. Are the human, institutional and financial resources available adequate for full implementation of the protected areas network, including for management of individual protected areas?	
a) no, they are severely limiting (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)	
b) no, they are limiting (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)	X
c) Available resources are adequate (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)	
d) yes, good resources are available	
13. Has your country requested/received financial assistance from the Global Environment Facility or other international sources for establishment/management of protected areas?	
a) no	
b) funding has been requested, but not received	
c) funding is currently being requested	
d) yes, funding has been received (please provide copies of appropriate documents)	X

Assessment

14. Have constraints to implementation and management of an adequate system of protected areas been assessed, so that actions can be initiated to deal with these constraints?	
a) no	
b) yes, constraints have been assessed (please provide further information)	X
c) yes, actions to deal with constraints are in place (please provide further information)	X
15. Is a programme in place or in development to regularly assess the effectiveness of protected areas management and to act on this information?	
a) no	
b) yes, a programme is under development (please provide further information)	X
c) yes, a programme is in place (please provide further information)	X

16. Has any assessment been made of the value of the material and non-material benefits and services that protected areas provide?	
a) no	
b) an assessment is planned	
c) an assessment is in process	X
d) yes, an assessment has been made (please provide further information)	

Regional and international cooperation

17. Is your country collaborating/communicating with neighbouring countries in the establishment and/or management of transboundary protected areas?	
a) no	
b) yes (please provide details)	X
18. Are key protected areas professionals in your country members of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, thereby helping to foster the sharing of information and experience?	
a) no	
b) yes	X
c) information is not available	
19. Has your country provided information on its protected areas to the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre in order to allow for a scientific assessment of the status of the world's protected areas?	
a) no	
b) yes (=> see also further comments)	X
20. If your country has protected areas or other sites recognised or designated under an international convention or programme (including regional conventions and programmes), please provide copies of reports submitted to those programmes or summaries of them.	
21. Do you think that there are some activities on protected areas that your country has significant experience that will be of direct value to other Contracting Parties?	
a) no	
b) yes (please provide details)	X

Further comments

Hereafter, further comments are given with regard to the different questions answered above. With the exception of some comments for Ramsar Sites, the comments generally concern Dutch policies regarding areas within the Netherlands itself, so excluding the overseas Antilles and Aruba of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Ad 2) Is there a systematic planning process for development and implementation of a national system of protected areas?

Nationally protected areas in the Netherlands relevant for biodiversity preservation include the following types distinguished:

(On basis of international conventions etc.):

- “Ramsar Sites” (*Ramsar-gebieden*) in accordance with the Ramsar Convention;
- “World Heritage Sites” (*werelderfgoedgebieden*) in accordance with the World Heritage Convention;
- “Natura 2000 Sites” (*Natura-2000-gebieden*) in accordance with the EU Bird Directive and Habitats Directive;

(On basis of Dutch national law and policy:)

- the Dutch “National Ecological Network” (*Ecologische Hoofdstructuur (EHS)*);
- “State Nature Reserves” (*staatsnatuurmonumenten*) and “Protected Nature Reserves” (*beschermde natuurmonumenten*) on basis of the Nature Conservation Act 1967;
- “National Parks” (*nationale parken*);
- “Protected Small-scaled Habitats” (*beschermde leefomgeving*) on basis of the Flora and Fauna Act 1998.

Besides, other types of protected areas in the Netherlands have been established too, such as “Silence areas” (*stiltegebieden*) and “Protected groundwater areas” (*grondwaterbeschermingsgebieden*).

Hereafter, further information is provided on the planning processes underlying some of the types of protected areas in the Netherlands just mentioned.

Ramsar Sites

In addition to the 26 Ramsar Sites already established in the Kingdom of the Netherlands (including the overseas Dutch Antilles and Aruba), the Netherlands has recently designated 25 new Ramsar Sites (see also the reports referred to in ad 20).

Ramsar Sites established in the Kingdom of the Netherlands are considered to meet the obligations of the Ramsar Convention. Nonetheless, there is concern about the potential damaging effects of intensive shellfisheries in the Wadden Sea on litoral and sublitoral biological diversity of the Wadden Sea. In the so-called Second Stage of the Evaluation of Policy on Shellfisheries in the Netherlands (*tweede fase van de evaluatie van het schelpdiervisserijbeleid in Nederland; EVA-II*) this problem will be further evaluated.

All but one of the Ramsar Sites in the Netherlands (excluding overseas territories) have also been selected as sites being in accordance with the EU Bird Directive (see: Natura 2000 Sites). Conversely, by no means all of the sites selected in the Netherlands in accordance with the Bird Directive are Ramsar Sites as well.

The underlying system for selecting (planning), monitoring and managing Ramsar Sites in the Netherlands (excluding overseas territories) is identical to the Dutch system applied for Special Protected Areas for birds protected under the EU Bird Directive (see: Natura 2000 Sites).

World Heritage Sites

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Cultural Affairs and Science nominates the Dutch sites to be considered for incorporation in the global UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. Initially, the Ministry nominated the sites on basis of a national “tentative list”. This list will be revised to meet the objectives of the Global Strategy of UNESCO.

Natura 2000 Sites (Special Protected Areas and Special Areas of Conservation)

Natura 2000 is an European network of sites selected in accordance with the EU Bird Directive, i.e. Special Protected Areas (SPAs), and with the EU Habitats Directive, i.e. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). For the planning process of Natura 2000 Sites in the Netherlands, see also ad 3, 4, and 5.

the National Ecological Network (EHS)

The EHS is a national network of protected areas resulting from systematic planning. In the national spatial policy document Structure Plan for the Rural Areas (*Structuurschema groene ruimte; SGR-1*), a rough map for the EHS has been designed at a national scale level. According to the national policy document Nature for People, People for Nature (Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries (2000)), the EHS has to be realized by 2018. The realization of the EHS relies on substantial financial assistance by the central government. At the provincial scale level, each of the twelve provinces of the Netherlands determine the precise boundaries of the EHS, i.e. each province determines the boundaries of “Established Nature Areas” (*bestaande natuurgebieden*) and “Nature Development Areas” (*natuurontwikkelingsgebieden*) regarding the EHS within their province.

Both public and private actors are involved in local management of EHS areas (see also ad 11)). For the purpose of achieving the target of realizing the entire EHS by 2018, the central government has laid out a scheme regarding the annual area to be purchased and or to be put under subsidized nature management.

State Nature Reserves and Protected Nature Reserves

Since 1971, 173 sites in the Netherlands have been established as “State Nature Reserves” or “Protected Nature Reserves” on basis of the Nature Conservation Act 1967. Designation of the sites was the result of different programs of the central government. Application of the Nature Conservation Act currently focuses on the protection of Natura 2000 Sites (see Natura 2000 Sites). The majority of the area of State Nature Reserves or Protected Nature Reserves already coincides with Natura 2000 Sites.

National Parks

The Dutch National Park system is developed and realized on basis of an established planning process including a procedure allowing for advice, public participation and final decision-making. National Parks are established in two stages. In the first stage, National Parks are still in formation. In the second stage, National Parks are finally established and subsidized on basis of a management plan that has been approved by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries. Ministerial orders provide the legal basis of National Parks. Currently, 14 National Parks have been established in the Netherlands. It is expected that an additional number of 4 parks will be established in 2004.

Protected Small-scaled Habitats

The establishment of “Protected Small-scaled Habitats” will result from planning processes at the provincial level. The establishment procedure is subject to regulations provided by the Flora and Fauna Act 1998 and the General Act on Administrative Law (*Algemene Wet Bestuursrecht*). Provincial Planning Commissions will be invited to give their advice on draft proposals regarding the selection of sites. Besides, prior to decision-making, the Provincial Executives (*Gedeputeerde Staten*) also have to publish their draft proposals in the national Official Publication of the Dutch Government (*Staatscourant*). Until now, no “Protected Small-scaled Habitats” have been established in the Netherlands.

Ad 3) Is there an assessment of the extent to which the existing network of protected areas covers all areas that are identified as being important for the conservation of biological diversity?

Ramsar Sites

The system of selecting Ramsar areas in the Netherlands (excluding overseas territories) is similar to the system applied for selecting the Special Protected Areas for birds (see Natura 2000 Sites). The system includes the use of knowledge on the areas in the Netherlands that have been identified as being relatively important for the species protected under the EU Bird Directive.

World Heritage Sites

Not applicable; most Dutch World Heritage Sites have not been selected for biodiversity preservation purposes.

Natura 2000 Sites (Special Protected Areas and Special Areas of Conservation)

Prior to proposing (and designating) the Special Protected Areas for birds, the areas in the Netherlands being important for birds protected under the EU Birds Directive had been systematically identified. Proposing Special Areas of Conservation for *habitats* protected under the EU Habitats Directive was based on research on the distribution of vegetation types in the Netherlands (which largely determine the habitat types distinguished). For the *species* protected under the Habitats Directive, the proposing Special Areas of Conservation was based on species inventories and expert knowledge both indicating the areas in the Netherlands being relatively important for these species.

the National Ecological Network (EHS)

It has been estimated that habitats of 60% of the species having been identified as “threatened” in the Netherlands are found present within EHS borders, whereas the habitats of an estimated 40% of the threatened species are mainly located outside EHS borders (Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuurbeheer en Visserij *et al.* 2000, p. 25). Further, the distribution within the EHS area of the following groups of EHS “target species” (which partly include “threatened” species; see Bal *et al.* 2001) has been compared to the distribution of these species within the entire Dutch territory: vascular plants (Lemaire *et al.* 1997), breeding birds (Boele *et al.* 1997), butterflies (Van Swaay 1997), and dragonflies (Stroo 1997). For the following percentages of “target species” of each of these species groups, over 50% of the species’ national populations (i.e. in terms of grid cell presence) were found present within EHS borders: vascular plants: 51%; breeding birds: 63%; butterflies: 68%; dragonflies: 76% (Veling 1997).

From a hydrologic point of view, not all established EHS areas are considered to optimally coincide with those areas considered to be important for sustainably maintaining optimal hydrology conditions for the biodiversity values of the EHS.

State Nature Reserves and Protected Nature Reserves

For State Nature Reserves and Protected Nature Reserves, no assessments have been made.

National Parks

According to an earlier assessment of the Interim Commission on National Parks (*Voorlopige Commissie Nationale Parken; VCNP*), most large ecosystems present in the Netherlands are represented in the Dutch National Park system.

Ad 4) Is there a policy framework and/or enabling legislation in place for the establishment and management of protected areas?

As already partly explained under ad 2), the different types of protected areas in the Netherlands are related to policy frameworks or legislation as follows:

Ramsar Sites

The protection of all but one Ramsar Sites in the Netherlands (excluding overseas territories) is based on the Nature Conservation Act 1967, because these sites coincide with Special Protected Areas selected for birds (see Natura 2000 Sites). Further, the establishment of Ramsar Sites is also subject of targets in the national policy document Nature for People, People for Nature (Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries 2000).

World Heritage Sites

The policy document Belvedere Memorandum (*Belvedere: beleidsnota over de relatie cultuurhistorie en ruimtelijke inrichting*) (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen *et al.* 1999) includes targets regarding the establishment of World Heritage Sites in the Netherlands. The policy document Memorandum on Spatial Planning (*Nota Ruimte*), which is currently in preparation, will also include such targets.

Natura 2000 Sites (Special Protected Areas and Special Areas of Conservation)

The Special Protected Areas for birds are protected under the Nature Conservation Act 1967. According to a proposed amendment of the Nature Conservation Act, which has been put

forward in Parliament, Special Areas of Conservation will also be protected under the Nature Conservation Act.

The establishment of both Special Protected Areas and Special Areas of Conservation is also embedded in national policy frameworks, including Nature for People, People for Nature (Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries 2000), Structure Plan for the Rural Areas (*Structuurschema Groene Ruimte*) (Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuurbeheer en Visserij & Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer 1993) and the policy document Memorandum on Spatial Planning (*Nota Ruimte*) (in preparation).

the National Ecological Network (EHS)

The EHS is legally protected on basis of the national Spatial Planning Act in connection with the national Structure Plan for the Rural Areas (SGR-1) (Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuurbeheer en Visserij & Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer 1993) and regional planning documents (i.e. *streekplannen* and *gebiedsplannen*) of the different Dutch provinces.

The main policy framework aiming at the realization of the EHS is the document “Nature for People, People for Nature” (Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries 2000).

State Nature Reserves and Protected Nature Reserves

Both types of nature reserves have been established and are legally protected on basis of the Nature Conservation Act 1967.

National Parks

The establishment of National Parks has not been embedded in Dutch acts. Ministerial orders provide the legal basis of National Parks.

Policy for National Parks has been formulated in several national policy documents, including structure plans and other documents.

Protected Small-scaled Habitats

The establishment of “Protected Small-scaled Habitats” is enabled by the Flora and Fauna Act 1998 and is also subject to regulations provided by the General Act on Administrative Law (*Algemene Wet Bestuursrecht*).

Ad 5) Have guidelines, criteria and targets been adopted to support selection, establishment and management of protected areas?

Ramsar Sites

For the selection and establishment procedure for Ramsar Sites in the Netherlands (excluding overseas territories), see also ad 3). Further, the procedure for setting management guidelines, etc. is similar to the procedure for Natura 2000 Sites (see below).

World Heritage Sites

See also ad 2). Selection, establishment and management of World Heritage Sites in the Netherlands follow protocols and guidelines of UNESCO.

Natura 2000 Sites (Special Protected Areas and Special Areas of Conservation)

For the selection and establishment procedure for Natura 2000 Sites, see also ad 3).

The EU Bird Directive and Habitats Directive provide rough guidelines, criteria and targets for the selection and management of Natura 2000 Sites. When Natura 2000 Sites are actually designated, more detailed conservation objectives for the sites are set or considered as well. Subsequently, these objectives are worked out into management plans for the sites. The plans also indicate the human activities considered to be harmful or not harmful for the species and habitats to be protected.

the National Ecological Network (EHS)

For the selection process of EHS areas, see also ad 2). The national Structure Plan for the Rural Areas (SGR-1) includes guidelines, criteria and targets for the EHS. At the national scale level, nature quality targets for the EHS have also been formulated by means of a national “nature targets map” (*natuurdoelenkaart*). At the regional scale level, more specific nature quality guidelines for the EHS have been formulated in regional planning documents (in particular, in *gebiedsplannen*) of the different provinces of the Netherlands. For nature management purposes, an elaborate framework of EHS “nature targets” has been developed (Bal *et al.* 2001). Guidelines for subsidized nature management of EHS areas are included in so-called “nature management packages” (*beheerspakketten*).

State Nature Reserves and Protected Nature Reserves

The Nature Conservation Act 1967 allows for designation of State Nature Reserves and Protected Nature Reserves by means of a designation decree. Both the Act and in the designation decrees contain guidelines and targets for selecting and designation of the sites. The Act also allows for formulating management plans for the sites.

National Parks

Generally, the selection, establishment and management of National Parks in the Netherlands follow as much as possible the concepts and guidelines from the IUCN Management Category System.

Management plans, approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries and referred to in the ministerial orders mentioned in ad 4), include specific management objectives.

Management guidelines are also formally embedded in the financial assistance documents (*financieringsbrieven*) sent by the Ministry to the Deliberative Bodies (*overlegorganen*) of the National Parks.

Protected Small-scaled Habitats

The establishment of “Protected Small-scaled Habitats” formally aims at achieving a favourable conservation status of specific plant or animal species being protected under the Flora and Fauna Act 1998. “Protected Small-scaled Habitats” are small sites. Even a single tree may be selected as such. Only sites considered to be significant habitats for protected species and not being located within the borders of established or proposed “*State nature reserves*” or “*Protected nature reserves*” (see above) will be considered for selection. The provisions of the Flora and Fauna Act 1998 for the establishment of “Protected Small-scaled Habitats” do not include specific procedures for setting management guidelines.

Ad 6) Does the management of protected areas involve the use of incentive measures, for instance, of entrance fees for park visitors, or of benefit-sharing arrangements with adjacent communities and other relevant stakeholders?

the example of the Dutch National Ecological Network (EHS)

Generally, as far as actual nature management of local EHS areas meets national and provincial targets for the locations concerned, the management is enhanced by financial assistance by the central government. However, not all of the actors involved in local management of EHS areas do qualify for the financial assistance. For instance, water supply companies and water boards are excluded. Water boards managing EHS areas, for example, may utilize apportionments of taxes for nature management purposes.

Further, nature preservation societies and foundations involved in EHS management may utilize resources resulting from membership recruitment, publishing of magazines, field trips organized, and legacies. The activities of such organizations also contribute to public support for the establishment and management of the EHS.

Local communities involved in EHS management utilize tourist taxes for enhancing recreational and educational facilities in EHS areas.

Further, private forest and estate owners involved in EHS management profit from tax benefits.

the example of Dutch National Parks

National Parks profit from (once-only) financial assistance by the central government to enable investments (for instance, for educational facilities for park visitors) and from (annual) financial assistance by the central government to enable specific nature management, maintenance activities, educational activities, nature-oriented recreation and research. Sometimes, the financial assistance involves co-financing by other actors (stakeholders) involved in National Park management.

Ad 7) Have the principal threats to protected areas and the biodiversity that they contain been assessed, so that programmes can be put in place to deal with the threats, their effects and to influence the key drivers?

Generally, the Network Ecological Monitoring (NEM) evaluates population trends of specific species, including in specific protected areas. For the cases that the National Ecological Network (EHS) insufficiently contributes to a favourable conservation status of “target species”, additional species protection plans (*soortenbeschermingsplannen*) have been scheduled to mitigate the threats identified (see Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuurbeheer en Visserij *et al.* 2000).

Further, the current state of fragmentation of nature areas in the Netherlands has been investigated. In addition, since several years, the Road and Hydraulic Engineering Institute (*Dienst Weg- en Waterbouwkunde*) of the Directorate General of Public Works and Water Management (*Rijkswaterstaat*) of the of the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management has published an elaborate series of studies on “defragmentation”: the *DWW-Ontsnipperingsreeks* (see e.g. Brandjes *et al.* 2002)

Current national mitigation policy regarding habitat fragmentation resulting from infrastructure is based on the Second Structure Plan for Traffic and Transport (*Tweede Structuurschema Verkeer en Vervoer; SVV-II*) (Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat & Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer 1990), including its revisions, and the Long-range Program Infrastructure and Transport 1994-1997 (*Meerjarenprogramma*

Infrastructuur en Transport 1994-1997; MIT). “Defragmentation” policy aims at mitigating several barriers, such as roads, for instance, by means of constructing tunnels (pipes) for badgers (*Meles meles*) and cerviducts for deer and other wildlife. The Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries and the Ministry for Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment are currently preparing a national Long-range Program “Defragmentation” (*Meerjarenprogramma Onstsnippering*) which will provide the basis of Dutch “defragmentation” policy in the near future.

the National Ecological Network (EHS)

According to the policy document Nature for People, People for Nature (Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries 2000), environmental quality will have to be such that it will not impede the attainment of the quality objectives set for the EHS. Much research efforts deal of have dealt with assessing environmental conditions required for the maintaining “nature target types” and ecosystems within the EHS area. Important environmental constraints identified include: humidity level, nitrogen availability, and degree of acidity. Besides, soil phosphate levels, and diffuse heavy metal soil contamination also appear to be constraints for species and ecosystems. In turn, these conditions are influenced by other environmental processes, including acidification, fertilizer accumulation and drying out.

In general, the fourth National Environmental Policy Plan (*vierde Nationaal Milieubeleidsplan*) (Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer *et al.* 2001) allows for environmental policy measures, including measures for nature areas. The measures include so-called source-oriented measures, for instance, to reduce emission levels, as well as effect-oriented measures, to mitigate environmental damage or to restore earlier environmental conditions.

National Parks

For National Parks the main threats and damaging factors have been recognized in the Management Plans for the parks. The plans also include programs to mitigate the threats.

Ad 10) Is there wide stakeholder involvement in the establishment and management of protected areas?

Stakeholders are widely involved in the establishment and management of several types of nationally protected areas in the Netherlands, including:

- *Ramsar Sites* (NGOs participate in a Ramsar Committee considering management measures for wetlands);
- *World Heritage Sites*;
- *Natura 2000 Sites* (the procedure of proposing sites includes substantial public participation; further, relevant NGOs are actively consulted in considering the selection of sites);
- *the National Ecological Network (EHS)* (determining the boundaries of EHS areas involves a public participation procedure; further, the central government encourages the founding of cooperatives of traditional nature management organizations and other relevant actors including farmers and other stakeholders);
- *State Nature Reserves and Protected Nature Reserves* (designating areas on basis of the Nature Conservation Act 1967 involves a public participation procedure);
- *National Parks* (in the establishment and management of the parks, extensive participation by various stakeholders, including nature management organizations, farmers, educational experts, provinces, and local authorities);

- *Protected Small-scaled Habitats* (in the establishment of “Protected Small-scaled Habitats”, the Flora and Fauna Act 1998 allows for public participation (i.e. commenting on the provincial draft proposals) by “anyone”).

Ad 11) Do protected areas established and managed by non-government bodies, citizen groups, private sector and individuals exist in your country, and are they recognized in any formal manner?

Ramsar Sites

For Ramsar Sites in the Netherlands (excluding overseas territories), see ad 10), Natura 2000 Sites.

Natura 2000 Sites (Special Protected Areas and Special Areas of Conservation)

See ad 10), Natura 2000 Sites.

the National Ecological Network (EHS)

The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries does not itself manage the EHS area. Instead, several public and private actors are involved in local management of EHS areas, including:

- individual farmers and stewardship cooperatives;
- private forest and estate owners, forestry groups;
- local authorities and recreation boards;
- private nature conservation organizations;
- the National Forest Service;
- the Department of Public Works and Water Management, water supply companies and water boards;
- the Ministry of Defence.

Moreover, the different actors include various formally recognized organization forms (legal bodies), such as “autonomous administrative bodies” (*zelfstandige bestuursorganen*), societies, foundations, and cooperatives.

State Nature Reserves and Protected Nature Reserves

State Nature Reserves are state property and are also managed by the state. Protected Nature Reserves are property of and managed by different non-governmental organizations en private persons (see the National Ecological Network (EHS)). Private contracts, but also management plans on basis of the Nature Conservation Act 1967, provide the basis of nature management of Protected Nature Reserves.

National Parks

Actors involved in landownership and management of National Parks vary. Some sites are managed by the National Forest Service, some by private nature management organizations (i.e. the Society for the Preservation of Nature in the Netherlands (*Vereniging Natuurmonumenten*) or specific foundations). However, most National Parks are simultaneously managed by different actors. For management purposes, for each National Park, a specific Deliberative Body (*overlegorgaan*) has been or will be founded on basis of provisions by the ministerial orders regarding the parks. The administrators of the Deliberative Bodies have been or will be appointed by the Dutch Minister of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries.

ad 12) Are the human, institutional and financial resources available adequate for full implementation of the protected areas network, including for management of individual protected areas?

the National Ecological Network (EHS)

The financial resources made available by the central government for purchasing, “arranging” and managing the different EHS sub-areas may be considered adequate. However, really firmly connecting the different sub-areas to achieve a more solid integral area network with less barriers for different species may require additional resources. As a result, some consider the financial resources currently made available insufficient to meet earlier formulated policy targets regarding realization of the EHS.

National Parks

For optimally meeting the management targets of the different national parks, the financial resources made available by the central government may be considered limited or inadequate.

Ad 13) Has your country requested/received financial assistance from the Global Environment Facility or other international sources for establishment/management of protected areas?

The Netherlands has received financial assistance from different EU programs or sources, including from the following:

- “LIFE Nature” (financial assistance received for ecological restoration of Nature 2000 Sites, i.e. “priority habitats” and habitats of “priority species”, and for the “arrangement” of EHS areas)
- “Interreg” (financial assistance received for purchasing and/or “arranging” EHS areas and river areas)
- “Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)” (financial assistance received for purchasing, “arranging” and managing EHS areas and for subsidized nature management in rural areas)

Ad 14) Have constraints to implementation and management of an adequate system of protected areas been assessed, so that actions can be initiated to deal with these constraints?

With regard to realizing targets of Dutch nature policy in general, including Dutch policy regarding protected areas, several constraints of public administrative or sociological nature are discussed in Kuindersma (2002). Hereafter, some further information is given with respect to assessments of constraints for the different types of nationally protected areas distinguished in the present report.

Ramsar Sites

For most of the Ramsar Sites, constraints have been identified and dealt with in management plans for these sites.

Natura 2000 Sites (Special Protected Areas and Special Areas of Conservation)

According to obligations of the EU Bird Directive and Habitats Directive, member states, including the Netherlands, report to the European Commission by means of *standard data forms* about the constraints having been identified. Moreover, the constraints identified are also included in management plans for Natura 2000 Sites.

the National Ecological Network (EHS)

The national Dutch Program Nature Management (*Programma Beheer*) is the main financial instrument for subsidizing nature management of the EHS area. Recently, the Program has been evaluated, including some operational constraints.

State Nature Reserves and Protected Nature Reserves

Constraints to implementation of State Nature Reserves and Protected Nature Reserves have not specifically been assessed. (As far as these areas coincide with Natura 2000 Sites, see also Natura 2000 Sites.)

National Parks

The financial resources made available by the central government may considered to be constraints (see also ad 12)).

Protected Small-scaled Habitats

Possible constraints for the establishment or management of “Protected Small-scaled Habitats” have not been investigated.

Ad 15) Is a programme in place or in development to regularly assess the effectiveness of protected areas management and to act on this information?

Generally, guidelines of the Dutch Finance Department require a periodical evaluation (at least every 5 years) of the efficiency of the financial instruments applied by the central government. This includes the financial instruments applied for financial assistance in purchasing and managing protected areas.

Ramsar Sites

Since all but one Ramsar sites in the Netherlands (excluding overseas territories) coincide with Special Protected Areas selected for birds (see Natura 2000 Sites), the effects of the site protection measures within the Ramsar framework are implicitly evaluated in the reports for evaluating the effects of protection measures within the framework of the Special Protected Areas. The reports are sent to the European Commission every three years (see also Natura 2000 Sites).

World Heritage Sites

Every 10 years, UNESCO evaluates the selected sites and objects.

Natura 2000 Sites (Special Protected Areas and Special Areas of Conservation)

Existing systems for monitoring species’ populations and habitats (vegetation types) are currently further developed.

the National Ecological Network (EHS)

A system for evaluating the realization of “nature targets” (*natuurdoelen*) formulated will be developed by the National Reference Centre for Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries (EC-LNV).

State Nature Reserves and Protected Nature Reserves

For Protected Nature Reserves, every 3 years, the nature management plans on basis of Article 14 of the Nature Conservation Act 1967 are evaluated.

National Parks

A so-called “Quality Evaluation System” has been developed for periodical evaluation of the state of National Parks. At least during every revision of a Management Plan for a park, this system has to be applied. The system indicates developments in several quality factors and enables (adjustments) of specific measures or actions on basis of the indications. The Dutch research institute Alterra currently evaluates the state of National Parks.

Protected Small-scaled Habitats

A specific evaluation procedure for assessing the effectiveness “Protected Small-scaled Habitats” to be selected has not been developed.

Ad 16) Has any assessment been made of the value of the material and non-material benefits and services that protected areas provide?

No extensive assessments are known of the value of the material and non-material benefits and services that protected areas in the Netherlands provide. (For an overview of Dutch socio-economic valuation studies regarding nature and environment, see Ruijgrok 2002.) However, in an ongoing policy process, different ministries and research institutes currently try to develop guidelines for incorporating the economic value of nature in general in economic decisions, such as cost-benefit analysis. For each type of “ecosystem service” to be distinguished, the best applicable non-market valuation technique will be considered for inclusion in the guidelines to be developed. It is very well conceivable that taking non-marketable values into account in economic decisions will in many cases reveal that the benefits significantly exceed the costs of protecting nature areas.

National Parks

The benefits and values of National Parks have been identified in general terms (see e.g. Boer *et al.* 1996). Moreover, the management plans and annual reports of the different national parks also include specific results achieved, including benefits.

Ad 17) Is your country collaborating/communicating with neighbouring countries in the establishment and/or management of transboundary protected areas?

Examples of transboundary collaboration include:

the Wadden Sea

There is close co-operation between Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands on the preservation and management of the Wadden Sea. See also:

- <http://www.waddensea-secretariat.org/>.

Political guidance for this co-operation is provided by ministerial conferences, which are held approximately every four years. Major issues currently under discussion include the sustainable development of the area, shipping safety, fisheries, sea level rise, and the nomination of the Wadden Sea for the list of World Heritage Sites.

National Parks

At the regional scale level, cooperation with neighbouring countries is often aimed at, in particular, for transboundary protected areas. Such areas include:

- the transboundary park De Zoom-Kalmthoutse Heide, established in 2002 by Flanders (Belgium) and the Netherlands, within the framework of the Benelux Economic Union;
- the transboundary park Maas-Schwalm-Nette, for which a common Public Body has been founded in 2002 in which Nordrehinland-Westfalen (Germany) and the Netherlands cooperate.

Ad 18) Are key protected areas professionals in your country members of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, thereby helping to foster the sharing of information and experience?

Approximately 6 Dutch professionals from the policy, nature management and scientific field are members of the WCPA. Most of them are working on international issues regarding protected areas. The professionals contribute in different ways to the work of the IUCN/WCPA.

Ad 19) Has your country provided information on its protected areas to the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre in order to allow for a scientific assessment of the status of the world's protected areas?

National Parks

Within the framework of revising and updating the so-called IUCN list, information on National Parks in the Netherlands has been provided to the WCMC.

Ad 20) If your country has protected areas or other sites recognised or designated under an international convention or programme (including regional conventions and programmes), please provide copies of reports submitted to those programmes or summaries of them.

Ramsar Sites

For the National Report of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on Ramsar areas (2002) see:

- <http://www.ramsar.org/cop8_nrs_netherlands1.pdf> and
- <http://www.ramsar.org/cop8_nrs_netherlands2.pdf>.

World Heritage Sites

Not applicable, since World Heritage Sites in the Netherlands have not been selected for purposes of biodiversity preservation.

Natura 2000 Sites (Special Protected Areas and Special Areas of Conservation)

The reports (in Dutch) in accordance with Article 12 of the EU Bird Directive and Article 17 of the Habitats Directive that have been submitted to the European Commission will be made retrievable on the Natura 2000 website of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries:

- <<http://www.minlnv.nl/natura2000/>>.

Ad 21) Do you think that there are some activities on protected areas that your country has significant experience that will be of direct value to other Contracting Parties?

In general, believing in the “manipulability” of nature is a significant basis of Dutch nature policy. Since the Netherlands is amongst the most densely populated countries in the world, most of the terrestrial area of the Netherlands has been strongly influenced by human interventions. Consequently, terrestrial primeval nature areas are virtually absent in the Netherlands, and Dutch nature policy puts much emphasis on restoring and “developing” nature as well as on subsidized nature management in agricultural areas.

the National Ecological Network (EHS)

An increasing number of countries is developing some form of networks of protected areas. Nonetheless, compared to most other countries, the Dutch network approach (i.e. the National Ecological Network (EHS); see also above) might considered to be typical with respect to the following three aspects:

- (a) with financial assistance, provided by the central government, areas of private ground (as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle) are *purposefully purchased*, to enable the completion of a *pre-planned (designed) target network of areas* (the completed jigsaw puzzle);
- (b) areas of private ground are *purchased with financial assistance by the central government*, and, *subsequently, the ownership of the ground is transferred to semi-public and private nature management organizations*; in other words, the central government is (assisting in) purchasing ground for the sake of completion of the network, but is not maintaining the ownership and management of the ground;
- (c) the moment the areas to be added to the national network are purchased, many of these rural areas are cultivated and still need to be “*transferred*” into “*nature areas*” (see also below: “nature development” or “new nature”); subsequently, when the areas have been “transferred” into “nature areas”, the areas may considered to function as a part of the *ecological network*.

For further information on the approach of the Dutch National Ecological Network (EHS), see e.g. Lammers & Van Zadelhoff (1996) and Bennet & Wit (2001). Information on the approach is also included in “Nature Balance 2002”, which evaluates the state of Dutch biodiversity and Dutch nature policy and which is retrievable in English as follows:

- <http://www.rivm.nl/bibliotheek/digitaaldepot/NatureBalance2002S.pdf>

the Dutch concept of “Nature Development” or “New Nature”

Since terrestrial primeval areas are virtually absent in the Netherlands, Dutch policy puts much emphasis on generating new biodiversity values or regenerating old biodiversity values that had been lost in former times. In this Dutch approach of “nature development”, even highly cultivated agricultural areas may be “transformed” into “nature areas”. For further descriptions of this approach, see e.g.: Aukema (1994), Verspui (1994a, 1994b), Woudstra (1994), Nowicki *et al.* (1996), Van den Berg (1998), Piek (1998), Phadenhauer & Grootjans (1999), Vera (2000), Swart *et al.* (2001), and Van der Windt *et al.* (in press).

transboundary collaboration regarding the Wadden Sea

In contrast to the policy just discussed, the preservation of the marine Wadden Sea area generally does concern the preservation of more or less primeval nature values. The transboundary collaboration of different Danish, German, and Dutch actors in preservation of the area may be an example of area preservation that may be of value for other Contracting Parties (see also ad 17).

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Acknowledgements

We thank Willem Ferwerda (NC-IUCN), Bart van Tooren (Vereniging Natuurmonumenten), and Herman Verheij (Waddenvereniging) for their stake-holder comments. Further, we thank Rienk Jan Bijlsma (Alterra), Irene Bouwma (Alterra), and Henny van der Windt (University of Groningen) for various references they provided.

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