

Press Release No. 71/2008

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Joint press release with the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation

Semi-natural bodies of water and leas sustain biodiversity

Conservation and environmental protection measures required

Loss of biological diversity is one of the key environmental problems we face in the 21st century. The Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) and the Federal Environment Agency (UBA) intend to work together towards a solution to this problem. More than 100 German and international experts from science and the field met at a symposium held in Bonn on 29-30 October 2008 to identify ways to sustainably safeguard biodiversity in and around bodies of water, leas, and in groundwater.

“In order to continue to make use of the many services that nature provides, e.g. the self-cleaning powers of intact soil and extraction of clean drinking water, we must handle her with care. Functional ecosystems do not come for free, and we must support and care for maintenance of their enormous worth”, explained Dr. Rainer Blanke, Head of Main Section I, Ecology and Ecosystems, at the BfN. UBA Vice President Dr. Thomas Holzmann added, “Protection of the diversity of species and habitats will only succeed if we expand upon classical conservation work, in other words protection of species and designation and linking of nature reserves, to include comprehensive protection of water, soil and air.”

72 percent of the various natural ecosystems and one third of animal and plant species in Germany are at risk. They all need water and many of are dependent on and either live in or near bodies of water. Measures are required at three-thirds of all rivers and lakes to restore good ecological status as required by the European Water Framework Directive. They include making weirs passable for fish and restoring embankment areas to more natural conditions. By linking semi-natural bodies of water and leas, species and ecosystems are able to adapt to changes in environmental conditions. A special call upon farmers has been made to avoid further deposition of plant nutrients from crop fields into surface and groundwaters. The symposium participants agreed that ecological improvement is necessary to maintain the biodiversity in bodies of water, leas and groundwater—for the sake of nature and mankind alike.

Dessau-Roßlau, 30 October 2008