IWRM Action Hub

CASE STUDY

Estonia: Viru and Peipsi Catchment Area Management Plan

Oil-shale mining and oil-shale based electricity production has caused serious damage to ground and surface water in the Viru-Peipsi catchment area in Estonia. Action was taken to enhance the protection of the water resources through a project that set out a management plan. The project included data collection, monitoring and capacity building. Due to the success of this project, it can be used as an example for future developments.

Background

Oil-shale mining and oil-shale based electricity production, chemical and other industrial activities, mine- and quarry-dewatering, mismanagement of oil and fuel stocks, inadequate waste management and untreated wastewater, and poor environmental management of agricultural activities have caused serious damage to ground and surface water in the Viru-Peipsi catchment area in Estonia. Negative consequences include the development of depression cones, an accelerated movement of pollutants from one aquifer to another, and the eutrophication of the shallow Lake Peipsi. These problems also impact on the Russian coast of Lake Peipsi. The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) dictates that water management plans must be introduced for all river basins in the European Union to ensure the sound and sustainable management of water resources. In Estonia, actions coherent with the WFD are also foreseen under national legislation and the National Environmental Action Plan. The project objectives were to support implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) in the context of Lake Peipsi Basin and Viru counties in Estonia. The project approach had to be multidisciplinary and transboundary. The Beneficiary, the Estonian Ministry of the Environment, is the highest, executive body for environmental protection in Estonia responsible for water policy planning and implementation. Project partners are: Tallinn technical University, Estonian Agricultural University, AS Maves, Maa ja Vesi, Wildlife Estonia, and Estonian Water Consultancy Ltd. On November 30th, 2002, the French Fund for Global Environment (FFEM) officially adopted the financing of the project. With a budget of EUR 1,728,320 the Viru-Peipsi CAMP project is one of the most ambitious initiative to set up a basin management plan in Estonia. A complex management system of the project ensures thorough information of Estonian and Russian authorities. In Estonia, a Project Steering Committee supervised the implementation of the project; technical and financial reports further on submitted to an Estonian-Russian Basin Steering Committee for final endorsement.

Actions taken

A multi-sectoral inventory and assessment of water resources and their management had to be conducted first. Then, a detailed programme of measures aimed at achieving good

status for water resources had to be developed, taking into consideration economic, social, environmental, and transboundary aspects of water management. Specific activities have been conducted throughout project implementation to reinforce Estonian administrative capacities leading to development of information tools, training of staff, information diffusion, and awareness building among stakeholders.

The project developed a management plan for the Viru-Peipsi catchment area, in order to enhance the protection of the water resources of the Narva river and Lake Peipsi basins. The expected long-term impacts included a progressive move towards a cessation of discharges, emissions and release of hazardous substances listed in the EU Priority List, in EU Lists I and II of Dangerous Substances, and in an Estonian-specific list of hazardous substances.

To develop the draft RBMP, the project carried out inventory and data gathering activities, in cooperation with the relevant national institutions. The project also elaborated an economic assessment of the expense of reducing the municipal, agricultural and industrial pollution load and proposed water protection and clean-up measures.

Capacity building activities included the training of technical staff in monitoring and sampling, as well as the upgrading of technical equipment (PCs, and GIS and MIS applications, for example). The project was instrumental in improving stakeholder dialogue and participation. The project carried out an extensive dissemination and exchange of information in Estonia including national-level television broadcasts.

Outcomes

The main result of the project is a draft River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). This was developed through expert and publication consultation. The Ministry will use the draft as the basis for the final RBMP in coming years, according to the schedule set in the WFD. In addition to the draft RBMP, the project provided assistance to the Ministry of Environment in revision of legislation concerning delineation of river basin districts and groundwater bodies.

The project provided valuable experience and expertise that will contribute to the further development of the final RBMP. The project has also contributed to an international dialogue with Russia, as the Lake is a transboundary lake.

This project has been selected as one of the 22 "Best" LIFE Environment projects in 2006-2007.

Lessons Learned

Drafting such a comprehensive river basin management plan brought a lot of experience to Estonian environment specialists, representatives of local authorities, and official involved in the project.

Close cooperation with French and Finnish specialists raised the motivation of locals and helped understanding the overall philosophy of the Water Framework Directive.

The inventory and data gathering put into the fore the weakness of existing monitoring network, as well as the information missing for assessing the state of surface and groundwater bodies.

The elaboration of the plan of measures showed that several local authorities pay no interest to water management issues. Often, local development plans for water supply or sewage collect and treatment, are missing.

Public discussions revealed: There are some hot spots important for local authorities which were not considered during the elaboration of the draft RBMP. Consultations with authorities and inhabitants are crucial in the final stage of the elaboration of the RBMP.

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Related IWRM Tools
Basin Management Plans
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Monitoring and Evaluation Bodies
Training Water Professionals
Environmental Impact Assessment
