

The FWP's Water and Biodiversity news digest



*Latest update from the French Water Partnership on water, biodiversity and nature-based solutions
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EMERGENCY WARNINGS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

IPBES¹ is an intergovernmental platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services. Commonly referred to as the “biodiversity IPCC”, the platform was established in 2012 and is open to all United Nations member states, 129 of which are currently involved. Similar to the IPCC, its aim is to bring together different global studies on biodiversity and ecosystem services and reinforce the connection between this research and decision-making.

The sixth plenary session of IBES took place last March in Medellín, Colombia. At this occasion, four regional reports were approved on biodiversity and ecosystem services covering the Americas, Asia Pacific, Africa, Europe and Central Asia. Back in November 2017, a [warning by 15,000 scientists](#) from 184 countries of the unprecedented degradation of the environment drew attention to the alarming global-scale decline of biodiversity and natural resources. The publication, which analyzes the trends of nine global indicators from 1960 to 2016, followed an initial appeal launched in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit and reveals, among other things, a 58% decrease in vertebrate species from 1970 to 2010; the drastic multiplication of so-called “dead” maritime and oceanic areas, amounting to 600 in 2010; and the disappearance of 129 million hectares of forest land from 1990 to 2015, which is an area equivalent to South Africa.

While the IPBES’s regional reports do relate biodiversity success stories, like a 14% increase in protected maritime areas in Asia Pacific over the last 25 years, they also point out that over-fishing in the same region is likely to deplete exploitable fish stocks by 2048, and indicate that inland fresh waters, coasts and wetlands feature among the most threatened ecosystems². One of the key messages of these reports is the undeniable link between the loss of biodiversity, the endangering of nature’s capacity to contribute to human wellbeing, and the respect for commitments made as part of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The same goes for the [Strategic Plan for Biological Diversity 2011-2020, the Aichi Targets](#) and the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 6 related to water, whose target 6 is to protect and restore water-related ecosystems, and SDG 14 relating to marine resources.

FRANCE AT THE HEART OF THE INTERNATIONAL AGENDA IN TERMS OF BIODIVERSITY

Warnings about the massive decline in biodiversity are not just being made at international level. In France, two studies recently carried out by the French Natural History Museum covering the whole country, and the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) on a local level, also draw an alarming picture, in particular on how intensive farming and pesticides impact the extinction of bird species.

In this global and national situation, the French minister of the environment, Nicolas Hulot, is preparing a Biodiversity Plan with the natural reserves of France and the network of managers of natural areas, due for completion this summer³. This fits in with a national drive to protect biodiversity: 2019 will feature the seventh plenary session of the IPBES and the G7 environment. These meetings will provide an opportunity for France to reaffirm its commitment to preserving biodiversity, and for world powers to renew international dialogue on the subject, in particular in the light of the results of the regional IPBES assessments last March. France is also a candidate to host the World Conservation Congress in Marseille in 2020. This congress is organized every four years by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). To prepare for the event, the French national IUCN committee is currently closely examining Nature-based Solutions and working on setting up a matrix of operational criteria for defining, identifying and promoting the implementation of these solutions. Collective messages based on these standards should be communicated in international arenas by 2020.

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS CURRENTLY BEING DEFINED

¹ Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

² Read the IPBES press release on the publication of these four regional assessments [here](#), and a summary of their main messages and figures from the Foundation for Research on Biodiversity (in French) [here](#).

³ Read the press release by the French Ministry for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition (in French) [here](#).



Societal Challenges

- Climate Change
- Food Security
- Water Security
- Disaster Risk
- Human Health
- Economic and Social Development

Nature-based solutions are defined by the IUCN as “actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits”. They concern three types of action: maintaining ecosystems intact and in good ecological status, improving the sustainable management of ecosystems used by human activities, and restoring degraded ecosystems or creating ecosystems (IUCN, 2016).

Conceptual framework of nature-based solutions, according to the IUCN

This definition highlights obvious similarities between actions to preserve biodiversity, ecological engineering and nature-based solutions. Although the IUCN is still carrying out think tank work to identify nature-based solutions, some criteria are already clear, i.e. biodiversity is not the main goal of a nature-based solution but rather one of its *co-benefits*, and a nature-based solution must imperatively respond to a societal challenge, such as climate change or water security.

2018, A YEAR OF NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS IN THE WATER FIELD

This year, several milestones show the growing importance given to nature-based solutions by the international water community. On 19 March this year, at the Global Water Forum in Brasilia, UN-WATER launched its [World Water Development Report](#). The publication highlighted the connection between nature-based solutions and SDGs, and the fact that setting up nature-based solutions for the sustainable use of water and ensuring water availability and quality cut across the SDGs. The Global Water Forum in Brasilia also coincided with World Water Day, celebrated annually on 22 March. This year, its key message was: “The answer is in nature”.

Several forthcoming events will provide an occasion to pursue international dialogue on nature-based solutions in the water domain and water biodiversity more generally. SDG 6 on water, of which target 6 is to protect and restore water-related ecosystems, is one of the six SDGs due for review in terms of implementation progress at the *High Level Political Forum* held in New York in July.

World Water Week, which takes place in Stockholm every year, has also chosen to focus on nature-based solutions. This year, in the same spirit as the United Nations World Water Report and World Water Day, and in line with the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement, World Water Week will centre on water, ecosystems and human development. It will take place from 26 to 31 August 2018.

WHAT ABOUT THE FWP?

For the French Water Partnership, 2018 will also centre on “preservation of water biodiversity” with a particular focus on nature-based solutions. Following the International Workshop on Ecological Engineering and Climate Risk⁴ organized in Paris in September 2017 in partnership with the Seine Normandy Water Agency, AFB, AFD, IUCN and IDDRI, and the launch of the [International declaration on “Nature-based Solutions, Water Management and Climate Change”](#), this year the FWP announced an action plan on this subject, supported by the Seine Normandy Water Agency and the French Agency for Biodiversity. The FWP will be highly proactive on the issue this year. For more information: <https://www.partenariat-francais-eau.fr/en/thematique/biodiversite/>

ABOUT FWP

The French Water Partnership, presided by former French deputy Jean Launay, is a public and private platform gathering 140 internationally active members into 6 groups: the state and public bodies, NGOs, associations and foundations, local and parliamentary authorities, economic actors, training research institutes and qualified personalities. For a decade, it has been lobbying at international level to make water a policy priority and promoting French expertise in the field.

<http://www.partenariat-francais-eau.fr/en/>



THEY ARE THE MEMBERS OF THE FWP



⁴ For a summary of the workshop, click [here](#).

Discover our biodiversity page here