



Community Water Conservation

Community water conservation is a movement of citizens to help clean up our rivers, oceans, lakes, beaches and coastlines and thereby create greater connection and engagement of citizens with water, allowing them to give back to our planet. The oceans contribute to 75% of the oxygen we have on this planet.

In this section, we showcase some of the community initiatives for water conservation, that are present in our regions. They are important examples of how community actions can lead to great results.

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PROJECTO RIOS

CATEGORY

Community water conservation

LOCATION OF THE PRACTICE

Portugal

PROBLEM THAT TACKLES

This environmental education Project is aimed at promoting social participation in the conservation of river areas, due to the wide-ranging deterioration of river quality and the lack of effective involvement of their users and the general population.

VOLUNTEERING ASSOCIATION OR PERSONS INVOLVED



ASPEA is a non-governmental organisation, most of the groups involved in the Project come from educational institutions, from kindergarten to universities.

DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRACTICE



The Project aims to create a network for monitoring and adopting stretches of rivers and streams by organised local groups. Using a methodology that is simple but rigorous, standardised, easy to apply and develop, these groups take the responsibility of monitoring and protecting the stretch of watercourse they have selected, thus contributing to the sustained improvement of water resources in general, and of the rehabilitation of their stretch of the watercourse in particular.



Each group is autonomous and must be accompanied on field trips by a duly trained project monitor, which must carry out two field trips per year (spring and autumn) and one improvement action. They are provided with a didactic kit consisting of materials for collecting data and gauging the reality of the riverside ecosystem at various levels: fauna, flora, cultural and ethnographic heritage and the quality of the water and banks.

These activities do improve the studied area and the global quality of a river, and they also inspire scientific curiosity and foster the experimental scientific method by collecting and recording information and geographic, physicochemical, biological, historical, social and ethnographic events. They also contribute to the implementation of the Earth Charter of the UN and the Water Framework Directive of the EU.

Various institutional entities (municipal councils, parish councils, schools, associations, non-governmental organisations, institutes and research centres), companies and the general population are involved in the Project. Currently, most of the groups come from educational institutions, from kindergarten to universities.

Sharing & Learning

The president of ASPEA, Joaquim Ramos Pinto, stated that

“in 2015 over the previous seven years, 50,000 people had adopted 187 kilometres of rivers in 20 Portuguese districts, removing two tonnes of waste from riverbanks and planting hundreds of trees. The main voluntary groups were groups of children, scouts, families and municipalities. There is a higher incidence of districts in northern Portugal because there was financial support from European funds for municipalities in the north”

Transferability of the Practice

The Project Rios has annually organised National Meetings, providing interested groups with the possibility of making known the work carried out on the adopted section, to raise awareness of positive examples of groups that care about rivers.

These Meetings include lectures, presentations of work developed by the groups, presentations of a play/music/dance created by the groups, and didactic workshops, among others. They are open to all and for many groups, work as a “guide” to understand what kind of activities they can develop around the adopted section.



IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD (START/END DATE)

Start Date: 2006

End Date: Ongoing

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS (RESULTS ACHIEVED)



In 2019 the Project had:

577 river/stream sections adopted in 141 municipalities; 301,5 km of river/stream adopted in 20 districts; 791 monitors in 51 training courses; 603 groups; more than 50,000 people involved in various activities

For a full overview of the results achieved so far, please see

<https://aspea.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/4b5a65c1dbc14c99ae43e9950fccbcce>



INFORMATION LINKS

https://www.facebook.com/projetorios/?ref=pag_e_internal

<https://aspea.org/index.php/pt/projeto-rios-conhecer>

<https://www.facebook.com/aspea.org/videos/1272797246551719>

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ECHEDOROS NATURE

CATEGORY

Community water conservation

LOCATION OF THE PRACTICE

The Delta of the river of Echedoros (Gallikos) and the lagoon of the village of Kalochori, Thessaloniki, Greece

PROBLEM THAT TACKLES

Although the areas of the Echedoros Delta and the Kalochori lagoon is part of one of the most important ecosystems in Greece, the litter that is being illegally wasted in the protected area, in both land and water, by mainly construction companies, farmers and fishermen, makes the intervention of "Echedoros Nature" volunteers urgently needed.

VOLUNTEERING ASSOCIATION OR PERSONS INVOLVED



The initiative belongs to citizens of the nearby villages and urban districts who have kept vivid childhood memories of the riverbanks and the estuary of Echedoros river being clean and friendly to visit, and who consider the present situation of neglect as inappropriate. The State and irresponsible individuals who have not been respecting nature for the past number of decades, it is believed are the ones to blame.

DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRACTICE



"Echedoros Nature" is a team of active citizens who lead actions against the manmade degradation of the wetlands of the Echedoros Delta and the Kalochori lagoon and fight against the destruction of its environmental value and beauty.



The team members voluntarily patrol the area finding rubbish and any sort of solid waste and inform the authorities to help remove them.

In the past couple of years, the team has found and notified the police over huge quantities of tyres being thrown into the riverbanks and the seashore, fertilizers' packaging containing dangerous chemical residuals being illegally burned in open-air fires, and they have cleaned overflowing rubbish bins inside the nature reserve and placed extra litter bins for the hikers where needed.

The team often organises and makes public calls to citizens for clean-ups in the area and arranges tree plantings in the nature reserve.

An important "Echedoros Nature" team's recent success has been the support of the state in their plan of reconstructing two old, half-destroyed hiking bridges along the main hiking route around the Delta, preserving the birdwatchers' observatory that has not been maintained in years and is in danger of collapsing, as well as replacing the worn-out trekking route signs.

The amount required for the construction works is raised through an online platform in the framework of the European project "Blue Crowdfunding", which is part of the European Territorial Cooperation Programme INTERREG MEDITERRANEAN 2014-2020.

"Echedoros Nature" team also organises guided cycling events in the routes around the Delta and the lagoon, with frequent stops in points of interest where the participants learn about the fauna and flora of the wetland.

Sharing & Learning

George Konstantinidis, an active volunteer and member of "Echedoros Nature" has stated in a formal meeting about the crowdfunding initiative:

"When I was a child, we were visiting the Delta with our school and we were celebrating the beginning of spring on the clear river banks with my family. All the detrimental results of the last decades' pollution in the area have started to change. We are determined to transform the Delta and the lagoon into what it was - a welcoming place for families and outdoor activities, that all citizens can easily access, as the centre of Thessaloniki lies only 10 kilometres away".

Transferability of the Practice

All it takes for the supervision and protection of the nature reserves is a handful of determined citizens who are committed to the task of fighting pollution and bad practices. The team members come together and form a union that must have a dynamic representation on social media with frequent online activity, aiming to gain popularity. The members must have some free time to dedicate to patrols, actions e.g. cleaning up activities, implementing ideas, finding sponsorships for litter bags to be placed in the area, and finding ways to raise finances is also to help run the project and proceed with bigger scale plans.



IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD (START/END DATE)

Start Date: 2020

End Date: Ongoing

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS (RESULTS ACHIEVED)



The volunteers of “Echedoros Nature” supervise the wellbeing of the nature reserve which should be successfully managed and protected by the State. Their commitment is remarkable and a bright example of socially and environmentally responsible behavior.

The team has helped remove tonnes of bulky waste from the heart of the protected wetland, has been informing the public about plenty of activities to clean/protect/revive the wetland and over sinister practices that pollute the area (e.g. burning of pesticides cans containing toxic substances, or petrol leaks coming from a ship in the port of the city, right opposite the Delta).

Through crowdfunding, the team has raised 2,285 euro so far for the maintenance of the hiking bridges of the wetland.



CROWDFUNDING LINK

<https://el.goteo.org/project/gallikos-delta-eco-path>

INFORMATION LINKS

<https://ca.goteo.org/project/gallikos-delta-eco-path>

<https://www.makthes.gr/echedoroy-fysis-kai-perifereia-charassoyn-xana-monopatia-sto-delta-toy-gallikoy-469013>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVdR7v4PJik>

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COMMUNITY 'WATER PROTECTORS'

CATEGORY

Community water conservation

LOCATION OF THE PRACTICE

Bulgaria, City of Sofia, 24 Krastyo Sarafov Str

PROBLEM THAT TACKLES

Water is the primary medium through which we will feel the effects of climate change. Water availability is becoming less predictable in many places, and increased incidences of flooding threaten to destroy water points and sanitation facilities and contaminate water sources. The poor water management, biodiversity loss and the continued exploitation of industries such as energy, agriculture and others have negative impact on the water sources.

VOLUNTEERING ASSOCIATION OR PERSONS INVOLVED



Green Peace Bulgaria together with more than 30 experts in water conservation, protection and management. The community is based on an online platform and includes more than 300 subscribers so far.

DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRACTICE



The good practice is about an e-learning platform developed and run by Green Peace Bulgaria. It aims to create a "Water Guards" community to exchange knowledge and realise activities aimed at water resource preservation in Bulgaria. To achieve its goals this platform is a place for various series of webinars and regular information events, organised with the help of experts and scientists from different fields presenting various topics such as the impact of climate change on water Resources; the impact of Hydro Power Plants on rivers and their biodiversity; actions that could protect water and others.



The platform facilitates the creation of a community to which everyone interested will be able to join. Participants will have the opportunity to meet other involved people from the country, share the problems they face and seek solutions to deal with them together as a community.

Involvement in the initiative is done by subscribing to a special bulletin "Water Guards", through which stakeholders will be informed about the development of topics and initiatives that are planned. So far, 5 webinars have been held on:

1. The impact of the coal industry on water resources;
2. Contemporary challenges to water protection in Bulgaria;
3. What is hydropower and how it affects nature and local people;
4. Danube before and now - nature, biodiversity and people;
5. Wetlands - the cradle of life.

Recordings from the webinars can be viewed on the Internet or on the Facebook page of Green Peace - Bulgaria.

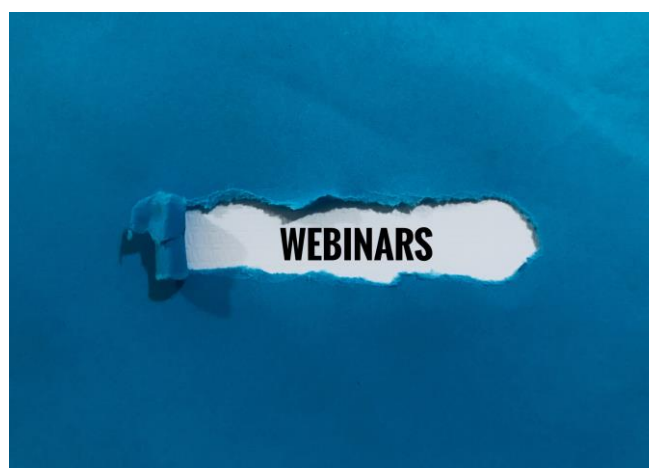
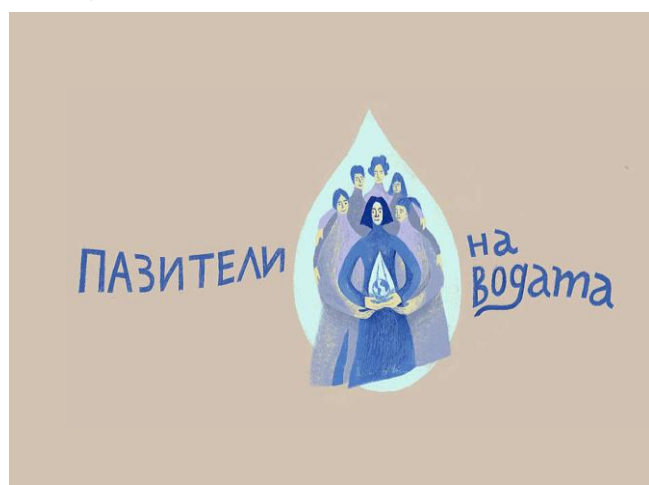
The platform provides open access and stakeholders are all citizens who want to join the initiative, regardless of gender, age, education

Sharing & Learning

Mr. Balinov stated *"Civil society has become a critical stakeholder in environmental decision-making processes and a valued partner in implementing and monitoring environmental policies at the local and national level. When their capacities are adequately developed and respective tools are available, civil society organizations (CSOs) can play important role in nature preservation and climate change actions."*

Transferability of the Practice

The good practice demonstrates how the e-platforms through webinars and information events can play an important role in engaging the vast majority of stakeholders from all over the country in nature, water and biodiversity protection. The webinars offer the opportunity to discuss various topics such as: the impact of climate change on water resources, the impact of Hydro Power Plants on rivers and their biodiversity; actions by which we could protect water, and others.



IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD (START/END DATE)

Start Date: 1/11/2021

End Date: Ongoing

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS (RESULTS ACHIEVED)



This is the first in its kind initiative in Bulgaria, to form a community of stakeholders on water protection and preservation. So far, five webinars have been held, with more than 300 people taking part and with more than 10 million views of the videos on Facebook. More than 1,500 people were interested in the webinars. New webinars are coming up, for which there will be information on the Facebook page of Green Peace Bulgaria - <https://www.facebook.com/greenpeacebg>



INFORMATION LINKS

https://act.gp/Blog_PaziteliNaVodata

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VerLTmWZKS0&list=PLQeUNU9u1jSFLnPESMz4ZVfu7-MxKvP3G&index=4&ab_channel=GreenpeaceBulgaria

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NOREVISION

CATEGORY

Community Water Conservation Project

LOCATION OF THE PRACTICE

Ireland

PROBLEM THAT TACKLES

NoreVision tackles issues of the future of the River Nore in the Republic of Ireland. This river runs through several counties in Ireland and therefore its health and conservation are of utmost importance to many citizens in its vicinity. Having a plan for the future of this river and its hinterland will give them some element of influence over the health and prosperity of the River Nore.

VOLUNTEERING ASSOCIATION OR PERSONS INVOLVED



NoreVision is a statement of the shared aspirations of stakeholders for the future of the River Nore, its tributaries, the land that drains into them, and the people who live and work there.

The Nore catchment is the source of drinking water, flood control, biodiversity, food and resource production for some 110,000 residents across 2,500 km² in a strong farming region.

Through a series of initiatives, such as, water quality monitoring, biodiversity walks, oral history, farming, education and invasive species, NoreVision aims to maintain the health and prosperity of the River Nore.



What is The Nore Vision?

First and foremost, The Nore Vision is an evolving initiative. To date, the initiative has been a consultation process funded by Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, Laois Partnership, North Tipperary Development Company and South Tipperary Development Company through LEADER funding under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

Who is The Nore Vision?

The Nore Vision is 'you'. It is every stakeholder who has participated in the consultation process, sharing their hopes and ideas for the future of River Nore and its tributaries, whether an individual or as a representative of a group, organisation or agency. The Nore Vision is overseen by a voluntary steering group with members drawn from the community, development organisations, local authorities and statutory agencies.

The Nore Vision process:

From October 2017 to March 2018, over 200 people participated in consultation workshops for The Nore Vision including residents, landowners, community groups, development organisations and government agencies. The consultations revealed that while people, groups and agencies have a range of perspectives and priorities when it comes to the River Nore and its tributaries, there is a great deal of common ground with regard to their 'Vision' for the future.

The Nore Vision report:

This report brings together the contributions of all the stakeholders that participated in the consultation and presents their collective aspirations and ideas for the future of the Nore and its tributaries. It also reveals the extent of people, groups, organisations and agencies working on matters related to the Nore. The

consensus that is documented in this report from around the catchment and across interests is a valuable outcome of the consultation process. This is summarised into the five priority themes of 'The Nore Vision' towards the end of the report. This is the statement of the shared aspirations of stakeholders for the future of the River and all of its tributaries, the land that drains into them, and the people who live and work there. It sets out the future that the participants in the 2017/2018 consultation process for The Nore Vision wish to see for the catchment during their lifetime.

Nore Vision is a 'generational' initiative with five priorities



IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD (START/END DATE)

Start Date: 2017

End Date: Ongoing



Sharing and Learning

NoreVision, after the results of the 2017/2018 report, began a series of initiatives. For example, they developed a water quality monitoring initiative, which aims to increase understanding and the identification of the problems that lead to water quality issues. The biodiversity walks are led by expert ecologists and help participants learn more about the catchment. The invasive species project aims to promote awareness of the importance of the River Nore for us and the oral history project was developed as an engaging activity to capture the heritage of the river.

Furthermore, NoreVision has education and farming programmes. They also have a podcast series about the project, its initiatives and an update on the work they are doing. This is how they share with others the work they are undertaking and promote themselves to bring others into the project to learn about the River Nore and its possibilities.

Transferability of the Practice

NoreVision is an extremely transferable project. It highlights the importance of taking care of the local Rivers, to protect the animals and fish from pollution. It also highlights that education, farming all play important roles in protecting biodiversity. By educating people on the history of the River and by leading them around the river, NoreVision aims to create a respect for the area, and to highlight its potential and importance in the community.



INFORMATION LINKS

<https://www.norevision.ie/>

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POLECAT SEC , 1 MW COMMUNITY PHOTOVOLTAIC FACILITY FEASIBILITY STUDY

CATEGORY

Community water conservation

LOCATION OF THE PRACTICE

Lisavilla, Elphin, Co. Roscommon

PROBLEM THAT TACKLES

Being a Community Co-operative, Polecat Springs GWS will be using all profits for community gain within its catchment. Currently they require their existing energy project to be enhanced and scaled up to meet the demand placed on it. With the main emphasis being on climate action, energy and environmental sustainability. Polecat Springs GWS have considered other types of technology for renewable energy generation but feel that it is best at this stage to go with Photo-Voltaic (PV) as it can be located in a way that has the least visual impact on the Community and will therefore have better acceptance.

VOLUNTEERING ASSOCIATION OR PERSONS INVOLVED



Operating for over 30 years, Polecat Springs GWS is the largest private Group Water Scheme in Co. Roscommon. They deliver a high-quality treated water supply to over 600 households and farms in and around the Elphin area. They have organised and spent over €5,000,000.00 of capital expenditure on elements such as providing a state-of-the-art treatment plant, network upgrading and leak elimination, metering, etc. Polecat Springs GWS operates a Source Site & Treatment Plant at Lisavilla, Elphin

DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRACTICE



The ultimate aim of the promoter is to upscale the existing Photovoltaic Energy Project for the production of electricity from a renewable source in Elphin. This project will be delivered to assess what is the viable scale of facility. The promoters then hope to apply for Community status under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS).



In 2019 Polecat GWS successfully installed a smaller scale 50kW PV installation with the aim of producing 70% of its annual electricity requirements (€10,000 per year) from this source. In 2020, this installation produced over €7,500 worth of electricity which was used on-site for pumping and treatment. This amounted to almost 75% of the scheme's energy demand. An additional amount of generated electricity worth almost €2000 was exported to the Grid.

Polecat is aiming at a minimum size of 1 MW up to a possible maximum of 5 MW depending on the outcome of the Feasibility study. The smaller size would involve an expenditure of just over 1 million euro up to a possible 6 million euro for a 6 MW plant. RESS is operated by the Department of Communications Climate Action and Energy as the cornerstone for producing electricity from renewable sources into the future. It offers a guaranteed Power Purchase Agreement up until December 2037 at the earliest. RESS also has a mandatory requirement for a Community Benefit Fund to be set up by the electricity producer. Being a Community Co-op, Polecat will be using all profits for Community gain within its catchment – with the main emphasis being on climate action, energy and environmental sustainability. The scheme has considered other types of technology for renewable energy generation but feel that it is best at this stage to go with PV as it can be located in a way that has the least visual impact on the Community and will therefore have better acceptance

Sharing & Learning:

The genesis of Polecat SEC in 2019 was the desire felt within the Polecat Springs GWS entity to reduce the annual electricity bill of almost €10K. The group identified renewable energy, in particular community solar PV, as the most optimum method of achieving this. The existing Polecat Springs PV System was the first large-scale community operated renewable energy project in Co. Roscommon.

The Final Report will be in the form of a Masterplan which will provide an overview of the current situation as regards energy sustainability in the area, using data on building age, BER ratings, population profile, motor vehicle profile and similar (based on National Census and other available data). This study clearly shows the need there is for works such as retrofitting homes, micro generation, sustainable transport vehicles and much more. Polecat Springs will be the Co-ordinator, Driver and Promoter of sustainable energy in the Community. It will also be an example of best practice that can be replicated in other communities throughout Co. Roscommon and beyond. If successful at this scale, there is the possibility of the Polecat Springs SEC being expanded to cover a much wider catchment area as has happened with CLAR in Claremorris.



IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD (START/END DATE)

Start Date: 28/7/2021

End Date: Ongoing

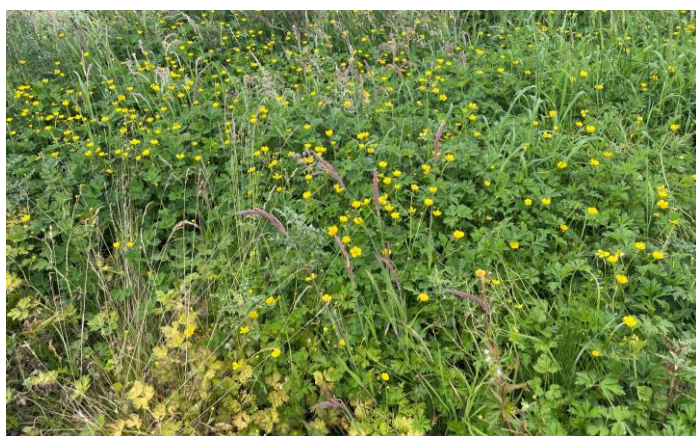
EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS (RESULTS ACHIEVED)



The motivation for the initial project was two-fold: firstly, to reduce electricity bills; and secondly, the group were passionate about the need to collectively reduce the dependency on fossil fuels locally with all the attendant consequences of such dependency. In addition, they also had the intention of raising awareness about and acceptance of renewable energy as a means of delivering Community benefit as well as environmental gain.

The ambitious vision of the project is to grow the SEC to provide a 5MW PV project within the 150sq km hinterland. Fundamental to the RESS Community Scheme is that this project is community controlled with potential profits from the sale of electricity into the grid returned to the local community for further development. The plan is to be a part of the government policy of locating more large-scale consumers of electricity closer to the sources of renewable energy with consequent employment benefits to the region.

As per the National Energy and Climate Plan, the promoters envisage the implementation of local schemes to retrofit homes to the highest BER ratings, the establishment of electric vehicles charging points as well as the encouragement of more sustainable methods of farming.



INFORMATION LINKS

<https://www.con-telegraph.ie/2020/03/05/west-of-ireland-group-water-scheme-launches-new-solar-panel-project/>

<https://www.veolia.ie/media/news-and-press-releases/group-water-scheme-launches-new-solar-energy-project>

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