

Social and economic aspects of peatland restoration

Fulfillment of sociological and expert studies as early as at initial implementation stages of rewetting projects on drained peatlands facilitates a successful completion of all project activities. Identification of stakeholders and parallel consultations with them promote making project solutions with minimal social risks. From the very beginning, these activities should be carried out with participation of experts and in contact with stakeholders.



Stakeholders in peatland conservation and development projects are typically regional and municipal authorities, fishermen' and wildfowlers' clubs, nature conservation agencies, ecologists, international experts, rewetting project developers, peat-production industries, farmers, local activists, etc.

To identify project stakeholders, their contacts, and impacts on making decisions, the snowball sampling can be used as a principal tool. This technique involves building a sample by forming a multi-level respondent group, with first respondents nominating other participants, and so on to the needed sampling size.

Stakeholder opinions can be studied using a combination of various techniques: a written questionnaire based on the Decision-Making Support System for Abandoned Peatlands developed by experts of the Michael Succow Foundation (MSF); detailed expert interviews made using a reference questionnaire; and consultations on possible risks associated with certain project solutions.

Analyzing materials collected, researchers identify interests, circumstances, and facts that may cause conflicts between stakeholders engaged in conservation and development of the rewetted site (stakeholder analysis). Using conflict management analysis, acceptable ways of conservation and strategic development of the rewetted sites are found and incompatible/compatible scenarios identified.

In 2014–2016, the EthnoExpert Consultancy team carried out sociology studies at the Meshchera National Park and the Kameshkovsky District in the Vladimir Region, in the village of Bolsheorlovskoye, the Nizhny Novgorod Region, and in the areas around the Orshinsky Mokh, Ozerki and Mokhovoye peatlands in the Tver Region.