

Commission and National Committee Reports 2018

Reports and Contact Details of Commissions

Peatlands and Society

FROM THE CHAIR

It has been an interesting year. The Scientific Advisory Board meeting in February 2018 in Amsterdam was highly successful and many important suggestions were put forward. The opportunity to meet face to face has been really beneficial for the progress of the work on the Commission. We are all fighting against a lack of time, but I find there is a drive among all of us in the Commission to address with questions that make a difference. We now have the scopes from the EGs and new experts have joined.

The jubilee in Rotterdam turned out to be a success in many ways. Productive meetings with important stakeholders were organized, and we had also worthwhile seminars and excursions providing us with a lot of new knowledge. The scientific meetings on our Commission went well.

The Commission for Peatlands and Society has webpages on www.peatlands.org, where we have collected much useful information about the Commission, for example, about literature, art and history connected to peat and peatlands. There is also an updated list of museums. We are planning to make more general changes to the new website for the whole organization.

In the coming year, I hope that the Commission for Peatlands and Society will have the opportunity to actively take part in the upcoming IPS Symposium Growing Media for Food and Quality of Life, to be held in China. I would also like to see the projects we have discussed during the year come to life, as well as welcome more experts onto the Commission. Even more close cooperation between the three Commissions is also one of the things that I would like to promote. I look forward to the Annual Assembly in Bremen and seeing everyone from the peat family again.

Many thanks to all who are participating on the Commission! Without your positive remarks, your drive and knowledge, it would be really hard to be the Chair! Special thanks are due to Anne Jelle Schilstra, who has served so long as the Chair regarding cultural matters.

Marie Kofod-Hansen
February 2019

FIRST VICE CHAIR, KIRSI LAUREN

Peatland and Society Activities of the IPS in Finland 2018

The Finnish Peatland Society, the Finnish Forest and Park Service (Parks and Wildlife Finland/Metsähallituksen luontopalvelut), the Finnish Literature Society and the Network of Environmental Humanities (Ympäristökulttuurin tutkijaverkosto) organized the National Suo (Mire)

Writing and Photo Collecting Campaign in Finland between September 1, 2018, and February 28, 2019.

People were asked to write about their various mire experiences and send photos of mires and peatlands. The writing and photos are expected to provide appropriate material for researchers who are interested in the social and cultural aspects of mires and peatlands.

See the call:

<https://www.finlit.fi/fi/arkisto/keruut/suo?fbclid=IwAR3Dba2jfYgGq8VDdz821kvdZSHhN6KDqigCG2YcHG--paDFxWaYrQtYovg#.XGAeA-QUkSk>

See the YouTube video (in Finnish):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WfBF1WZYhQ&fbclid=IwAR2y41JkVxcHJ9yF0P0uqQ_3TGriXeaJXKaTbAc-14w8M3kN8O5ZMZQw8HU

Cultural and social research aspects of mires and peatlands were presented during the International Wetlands Day on February 2, 2018. The Finnish Peatland Society organized the Peatland Day Seminar at the House of Sciences and Letters in Helsinki, Finland. The theme of the seminar, organized for the second time in 2018, was "Peatlands in Finnish Society".

See the program (in Finnish):

<http://www.suoseura.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Suopaiva2018-ohjelma.pdf>

See also: <http://www.suoseura.fi/category/suopaiva>

Some Future Plans for the Commission for Peatlands and Society

One of my aims is to concentrate more on the research perspectives concerning cultural and social aspects of mires and peatlands. Important research topics include:

- the role of culture in the sustainable use of peatlands
- indigenous people and the peatlands
- socioecological and socioeconomic aspects of peatlands
- peatlands, health and well-being
- human influence on the history and future of peatlands

SECOND VICE CHAIR, RACHEL CARMENTA

My Activities During 2018 on the Commission

I contributed to the commission session at the IPS Symposium by preparing a presentation. I visited Dr Sara Thornton (University of Leicester) and discussed her interest in joining the EG. During 2018, I also shared with all Commission members the letter for inviting experts, organized our Dropbox commission and developed the list of experts. I contributed to the Commission session at the Rotterdam Symposium with a presentation entitled "Predictors of Performance: What Determines Success in Fire-free Villages on Indonesian Peatlands?" I submitted a proposal for a

session at the Environmental Justice Conference (UK, July 2019) to discuss the environmental injustice of extensive wildfires on peatlands and tropical forest landscapes.

Guest Lectures/Seminars

Predictors of Performance: Conditions Driving Success in PES Schemes to Prevent Peat Fires in Indonesia (University of Leicester, UK)

Perceptions Across Scales of Governance and the Indonesian Peatland Fires (University of Cambridge, UK)

Challenges of Balancing Economic Development with Ecological Responsibility: Indonesia's Burning Peatland Frontiers (University of Cambridge, UK)

Moving Forward

I would like to see more active engagement by the Commission with the activities of the IPS. I will also contribute a session at the forthcoming conference in China to raise the visibility of the Commission and our contribution to underscoring the importance of sustainable peatland management. I would also like to see an initiative that we could pursue, which would engage the experts within our Commission, and across Commissions.

Reports

I compiled a review for UNESCO on the impacts of the Indonesian peatland fires on public health in the ASEAN region, entitled *Report: Peatlands in Transition: A Bioethical Appraisal of the Toxic Haze and Its Impacts in Southeast Asia*. The report is not available yet, but links the grave health implications of prolonged toxic smoke exposure with the UNESCO declaration on bioethics. It is a concise account of the infringement of peatland fires on the rights and freedoms of people living in the region.

Research

I have worked on completing an analysis of the predictors of performance related to a policy for fire-free land management on Indonesian peatlands.

PEATLANDS EDUCATION, COMMUNICATION AND PUBLICITY

Coordinator: Catherine O'Connell, bogs (at) ipcc.ie

Ongoing Projects on the Expert Group

The WikiPeat Project

In the spring of 2017, the WikiPeat Project started, a project aimed at improving the Wikipedia content about peat and related issues. As many IPS members have outstanding knowledge about these subjects, we can contribute to this initiative in accordance with the IPS mission: *to serve all those involved in peatlands through the promotion, gathering exchange and communication of*

knowledge and experience, by means of events and projects which address key issues, including climate change, biodiversity, the need for responsible use and restoration.

As the Wikipedia Internet pages are among the most frequently visited pages, thanks to Google, this project is a priority for serving this mission.

Most IPS members are positive about the project, but too little has been done in the past two years. Several reasons can be given for this, but history cannot be changed. The future can. Having expert knowledge about peat is probably strongly correlated with having little or no time for contributing to WikiPeat. But this project's intention could help with that. Apart from trivial changes on Wikipedia pages, more complicated improvements may require some experience. But content and technique can be separated: textual improvement (or illustrations or references) can be handed over to someone who is skilled in applying this to the web. Please note: apart from the Peat Family, there exists also an extensive Wikipedia Family, with representatives of all our languages.

The WikiPeat Project aims at using and connecting these two. The threshold between improving text on your PC and its appearance on the web can be really low!

To advance this interaction, the National Commissions will be asked to cooperate (some have already been asked). They will also be asked to identify a contact person and invite their members to participate. Details on how to realize this can be varied.

The WikiPeat Project will be an ongoing project, where representatives of different languages will follow their own path, but sharing experience will be stimulating!

PEATLANDS AND CULTURE

Coordinator: Anne Jelle Schilstra, a.j.schilstra (at) rug.nl

Michiel Gerding is taking over as Chair from January 2019, secretaries (at) veengenootschap.nl

Experts:

Michiel Gerding; Veengenootchap NL, secretaris (at) veengenootschap.nl

Dace Ozola, Latvian Peat Association, dace.ozolz (at) peat.lv

Laimdota Kalnina, University of Latvia, laimdota.kalnina (at) lu.lv

The Peatlands and Culture EG defined the scope of the group during 2018 as follows:

This expert group focuses on the relationship between people and peatlands, or mires. We draw on interdisciplinary fields of studies, particularly the humanities and social sciences, to explore the cultural meanings of peatlands in everyday life, individual and collective experiences, values and attitudes, and the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of peatlands. We draw on people's oral or written narratives, literature, archaeological findings, folklore, peat and mire art, and popular culture (e.g., films, videos, music, dance and commercials) concerning peatlands, to understand the meanings and uses of peatlands for people and societies around the world.

The list of peat museums has been updated throughout the year.

PEATLANDS AND PEOPLE, HEALTH AND LOCAL LIVELIHOODS

Coordinator: Dian Novarina, dian.novarina (at) aprilasia.com

Experts:

Sara Thornton, University of Leicester

Michiel Gerding, Nederlands Veengenootschap

Tim Fenton

Iwan Setiawan, APP SinarMas Forestry

Viktor Boehm, Kalteng Consultants

Elim Sritaba, APP SinarMas

Professor Susan Page, University of Leicester

PEATLAND CONVENTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Coordinator: Jack Rieley, jack.rieley (at) btinternet.com

Deputy Coordinator: Gerald Schmilewski

Experts:

Mitsuru Osaki

Jaakko Silpola

Samu Valpola

Bambang Setiadi

Paul Short

C. Nugroho, APP SinarMas

Iwan Setiawan, APP SinarMas Forestry

Objectives of the Expert Group

1. To bring together a group of IPS members with knowledge of and experience in international conventions, agencies, agreements and programs to monitor, assess and publicize, within the IPS and elsewhere, the activities and importance of these organizations with respect to peatlands and peat.
2. To liaise with the advisory bodies of relevant international organizations and contribute to them by providing balanced information on peatlands and peat, participating in discussions on policy, contributing to policy and other advisory statements and promoting side events at the 'Conferences of the Parties'.
3. To establish within the IPS a network of National Committee contacts who will liaise with the EG Core Team for the two-way flow of information on the activities of these international organizations.
4. IPS National Committee focal points may be required (or a deputy) to attend meetings of certain international organizations if they are held in their country (e.g., CBD, UNFCCC, Ramsar).
5. To carry out similar monitoring and response activities of regional organizations that adopt policies concerning peatlands and peat (e.g., in Europe [EU, NORBALWET] and North America).

6. To engage with and provide advice to other organizations in different parts of the world with which the IPS has relationships, responsibilities and obligations (e.g., Global Peatland Initiative, Tropical Peatland Round Table).
7. To report to the Executive Board and the Scientific Advisory Board on a regular basis.

The EG CIA was established at the IPS Executive Board meeting held in Aberdeen on May 28, 2017, 21 months ago. I was named as the Coordinator and formed a small core team of experts with knowledge of international conventions and international affairs concerning peatlands and peat. I also asked each IPS National Committee to nominate one of their members as a country focal point with whom to communicate and contact their country convention representatives and focal points. In this way, the IPS could form a global view of the activities of international bodies and how these are influencing national and regional peatland and peat policies.

Progress has been slow, however, partly because I had a major operation at the end of October 2017 which involved a long recovery time, but also because only two of the 16 National Committees responded, and the task proved more time-consuming and difficult to implement than anticipated. Nevertheless, some goals have been achieved, and I have reported on these to the Executive Board and the Scientific Advisory Board and given presentations at IPS conferences and seminars. In addition, the number of international bodies with interests in peatlands and peat has increased, making it more difficult to keep track of them all.

More people than myself need to be involved in the important work of this EG, especially from the National Committees, so we are aware of what is happening at the point where policies on peatlands and peat are implemented. As an indication of the scale of the work involved, there are at least 10 international conventions, agencies, programs and other organizations all of which have advisory or subsidiary bodies which consider aspects of peatlands and peat, pass resolutions, and feed information into policymaking processes.

The advisors and experts involved in these international bodies are drawn from governments, universities and research institutes, environmental NGOs and other specialized organizations as required. An introduction to the origin, objectives, modus operandi and impact is provided in the IPS Publication "International Convention, Agencies, Agreements and Programs", which everyone should read at <http://www.peatlands.org/conventions2014>.

It is important to realize that much of the input to all these international bodies comes from the participation of environmental NGOs which are equally numerous and influential. Therefore, it is important to know who these are and what they do and why.