

The “Power to the Peatlands” conference reunited over 500 scientists, site managers, farmers, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organisations and decision-makers, i.e. the largest conference of peatland experts ever held on the globe. Together, we developed the following evidence-based recommendations for Europe, using the latest scientific findings and multiple sources of knowledge such as those gained in the EU Interreg Care-Peat project.

Empower nature, climate and future now!

Declaration of the “Power to the Peatlands” conference 19th to 21st
September 2023, Antwerp, Belgium



Antwerp, 21 September 2023

Peatlands can help solve many challenges that people face now and in the future. Peatlands are huge, but vulnerable carbon stocks. They store and regulate water, harbour unique biodiversity, and provide essential social and cultural values. Peatlands must be wet to fully provide these functions.

Drained peatlands cause massive economic and environmental harm; by releasing the previously stored carbon, they globally emit double the greenhouse gases produced by air travel.

We have to act together. Land users, land owners, decision makers, NGOs, scientists and entrepreneurs must find common ground. Conservation, rewetting and restoration of peatlands are key to reach global and EU goals with respect to climate, soil health, water, biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods. We feel the urgency, we know what to do. We must act now!

1. **Preserve all natural peatlands and organic soils within Europe and beyond**
 - Immediately stop any further drainage or reclamation.
2. **Accelerate rewetting of drained peatland**
 - Rewet to stop CO₂ emissions and to enhance water retention, water quality, and biodiversity.
3. **Move rapidly to sustainable business models and wet peatland use**
 - Integrate environmental benefits, rural income generation and production of high-quality biomass.
 - Phase out all drainage-based land use and public payments encouraging these.
 - Stimulate the creative entrepreneurship of farmers, land owners and downstream industries.
 - Progress rewetting, paludiculture and carbon farming in agricultural policy and payment schemes.
 - Stop all extraction and use of peat.
4. **Make high-resolution open-source data available to guide and facilitate conservation, rewetting, restoration and sustainable use**
 - Support peatland mapping, monitoring and research to improve and verify national greenhouse gas inventories, biodiversity reporting, and carbon standards.
5. **Acknowledge the central and connecting role of water in the landscape**
 - Treat peatlands as integral parts of catchment areas to improve landscape-wide water security.
6. **Include ambitious peatland restoration targets in the Nature Restoration Law!**
 - Make the Nature Restoration Law consistent with other and overarching EU and global policy targets and commitments.

Power to the Peatlands!