

NETHERLANDS - INTEGRATED PLANNING FOR THE VELUWE RANDMEREN REGION. CASE # 89

ABSTRACT

Description

With the construction of the Afsluitdijk (IJsselmeer dam) in 1932, the Zuyderzee in the Netherlands was closed off from the sea. Over the years, the salinity of the newly formed lake declined. In the period 1956 – 1967, the polder Flevoland was constructed. After completion, four lakes, located between the polder and the “old land”, were formed. These four lakes are called the Veluwe Randmeren (Veluwe border lakes). In the 1960s and 1970s, it became clear that the discharge of phosphates and nitrates from agriculture and household use was having a negative impact on the water quality in the lakes. In 1986, a group consisting of national and local authorities undertook a project, which gradually increased the water quality. In the 1990s, the lake region started attracting more and more people, thus posing new threats to the sustainable development of the region. To balance the natural and recreational functions in and around the Veluwe border lakes, a coalition of 19 authorities, interest groups, industries and individuals, joined forces and agreed to work on an integrated planning project for the Veluwe Randmeren.

Both the communication between all parties involved and the technical issues played an important role in this project. In total about 300 people helped define the problems in the Veluwe Randmeren. On the bases of the results of these meetings, experts defined strategies for the development of the region. One of these strategies has been elaborated into a regional plan, containing 36 measures. These will be executed within the period 2002 – 2010.

Lessons learned

Allowing stakeholders the opportunity to get to know each other individually and to put forward their own ideas and interests:

- Helped when unexpected problems arose,
- Formed the bases for collaboration in the execution phase, and
- Insured that upon execution, all participants had the same perception of the project.

Importance for IWRM

Ten municipalities, two water boards, three provinces, four ministries and several technical experts and interest groups were involved in the process of defining the most serious problems for the Veluwe Randmeren region. Through the participation of all stakeholders in the whole planning phase, it was possible to design an integrated development plan, which addressed the problems in the region. This plan discusses the water-related measures to be implemented in the region, including nature, recreation and economic interest.

Main tools used

- A1.2 Policies with relation to water resources
- B1.9 Civil society institutions and community based organisations
- C4.2 Communication with stakeholders
- C4.5 Information and transparency for raising awareness
- C5.2 Shared vision planning
- C5.3 Consensus building
- C8 Information exchange: sharing knowledge for better management

MAIN TEXT

1 Background and Problems

In 1932, the construction of the Afsluitdijk in the Netherlands closed off the Zuyderzee from the North Sea. This led to a different hydrologic system. Input into the IJsselmeer consists of water from the river IJssel, smaller rivers and precipitation. Salt water only enters when the sluices in the Afsluitdijk are opened. This resulted in a gradual decline in salinity of the newly formed lake.

In 1956, the Drontermeer (Dronter Lake) and the Veluwemeer (Veluwe Lake) came into being when the polder Eastern Flevoland was finished. In 1967 the construction of the polder Southern Flevoland led to the existence of the Wolderwijd and the Nuldernauw. These four lakes are located in the southeastern border of the IJsselmeer between the polder and the "old land." The lakes are called the Veluwe Randmeren (Veluwe border lakes). The total area is 64 km², the length of the shore is 138 km. The mean water depth is 1.5 m. During the first years after the construction of the Flevopolder, the water in the Randmeren was clear and home to abundant flora and fauna (especially bird populations). However, the Randmeren also served as a collector for agricultural and household wastewater. The resulting high concentrations of phosphates and nitrates had a negative impact on the lakes.

In the early 1970's, excessive algae growth turned the water in the Randmeren into a "green soup". This prevented the growth of water plants and, consequently, effected the fish population. Pike depend on the shelter of water plants for hunting and were replaced by bream, which search for food on the muddy or sandy lake bottom. Bream also live on water fleas, whose main food is algae. The reduction in a natural enemy also affected the explosive algae growth.

In 1986, national and local authorities joined forces to combat the abundant growth of algae in the Veluwe Randmeren. The actions taken gradually led to improved water quality.

In the 1990's, the lake region started to attract more and more people, thus posing new threats to the sustainable development of the region. All parties were aware that action must be taken immediately in order to prevent a return to the problems of the 1970's. To balance the development of the natural and recreational functions in and around the Veluwe border lakes, a coalition of 19 authorities, interest groups, industries and individuals, took part in the project IIVR (Integrated Planning of the Veluwe Randmeren). The realisation of this plan took place in cooperation with all relevant groups and individuals.

2 Decisions and Actions Taken

In the past, administrative dispersion and increasing demands on the available space led to the delay in the realisation of plans. Another cause for delays and sometimes even the cancellation of plans was the absence of societal support. In order to make fair agreements, the relevant 19 authorities wanted to draw up one combined plan. As societal support is known to be essential in the plan, an interactive procedure was developed. Close cooperation with interest groups and citizens was of paramount importance.

One of the assumptions in an interactive working-method was that stakeholders needed to be involved in a very early stage of planning. Also close co-operation and efficient communication between inhabitants and representatives of interest groups, policy staff members and principals was used to increase the societal support for the ultimate plan.

To exchange and make use of information as efficiently as possible during meetings, several methods were developed. One method was to enlist the services of cartoonists. The use of this medium to display discussion points made many of the complex issues crystal clear at a glance.

Along with communication techniques, a distinct structure of the planning process as a whole was necessary. Within the project, four phases were discerned:

- Phase A Problem definition
- Phase B Draw up of planning strategies
- Phase C Design of a regional plan
- Phase D Execution

Phase A. Problem definition (Voting phase, 1997)

In 1997, about 300 people compiled a list of almost 1500 positive and negative issues regarding the Veluwe Randmeren. Most of these points concerned the Veluwe Randmeren as a whole. The issues in need of solution were classified into three categories:

Category I: the solution fit within the existing policies and needed administrative, juridical and/or financial attention.

Category II: the solution was not obvious. Knowledge and creativity needed to be applied to reach a solution. Once the solution is determined the administrative, juridical and financial aspects will be studied.

Category III: the solution was outside the scope of the project, as defined in the process plan, for administrative, juridical or financial reasons.

The results in this phase have been set down in the booklet “Veluwerandmeren over de eeuwgrens, Duizend en één stemmen” (Veluwe Randmeren after the turn of the century, one thousand and one opinions), May 1998.

Phase B. Draw up of planning strategies (Agora phase, 1998)

Working sessions were organized and experts were brought in, to address the ideas, suggestions and solutions generated in phase A. In this process, ideas were studied and checked against the operative policy. The result of this phase was both the selection of building blocks for a regional plan (described in the document “Reference 4”) and the formation of a steering group (formed by representatives from authorities involved). These results were presented publicly in October 1999 during information meetings.

Phase C. Design of a regional plan (Action phase, 1999)

The building blocks were transformed to concrete design measures. In November 2000, the concept of the report was presented in public. Reference 6 describes the results. In June 2001, the planning program was determined officially by the signing of a covenant. The program contained 36 measures. In order to structure the measures, seven “packages” of measures were identified. These packages are:

1. Water package
This package focuses on the conservation and improvement of the current water quality. For example, the construction of central points for the collection of sewage water from recreational crafts.
2. Wet nature package
This package focuses on the reinforcement of links between water, land and the construction of stepping stones for migrating animals. Examples include, the re-engineering of the mouths of streams in the region and the broadening of intermediate reed shores, both facilitating biotopes for birds, small rodents and insects.
3. Water sport package
This package focuses on, amongst others, shifting the channel in the Wolderwijd. This will lead to a clear zone for nature (east of the channel), recreation (west of the channel) and professional shipping (channel).
4. Use of the shore of Flevoland package
This package contains all measures that have a relation to the shores of the province of Flevoland. Examples include, the recovery of the former mole of Elburg (leading to the recovery of the cultural heritage) and construction of an easy to reach landing place for disabled sport fishers.
5. Recreation Flevoland package
This package consists of measures stimulating and facilitating development. Examples include, the construction of several beaches near Zeewolde and the development of recreational areas.
6. Use of the shore of Gelderland package
On the shore of Gelderland, the measures focus on increasing the value of the shore zone between Elburg and Harderwijk as an ecological link between large natural areas.

7. Recreation Gelderland package

In Gelderland, the recreation package is aimed at facilitating several outdoor activities in Horst and Nulde-noord for which private parties will need to obtain a license.

Phase D Execution phase (from 2000)

In the period 2002 – 2010, the 36 measures will be executed. Annual presentations and half-yearly newsletters will continue to inform the public.

3 Outcomes

The realisation of the measures will be implemented over the period 2002 – 2010. During this time period impact assessments, conducted by experts, will be carried out on several aspects of the project.

4 Lessons learned and replicability

Allowing stakeholders the opportunity to get to know each other individually and to put forward their own ideas and interests greatly affected the outcome of this project. An environment focused on collaboration helped when unexpected problems arose and insured that upon execution, all participants had the same perception of the project. In a multidisciplinary study such as the Integrated Planning for the Veluwe Randmeren region, this alone was a major result.

The methods applied in this study may be applied in other studies where many parties with conflicting interests are involved. All activities have been described in reports, making it relatively easy to transfer the methods used to other studies.

5 References and organisations

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Gelderland (www.gelderland.nl)
Overijssel (www.overijssel.nl)

Ministries:
Ministry of Economic Affairs (www.minez.nl)
Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries (www.minlnv.nl)
Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (www.minvrom.nl)
Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management (www.minvenw.nl)
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