

Keynote Jack Rieley (Extended abstract)

STRATEGY FOR RESPONSIBLE PEATLAND MANAGEMENT: WHAT AND WHAT NEXT?

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BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

It is an honour to be invited to give this keynote on the most important spectrum of issues facing not only IPS but peat and peatland stakeholders globally. I like to think I have been invited to address Congress on this topic because of my long career as a peatland scientist and as a long-standing member of this illustrious Society. In this latter respect I have gained a wide knowledge of peat and peatlands beyond my own specific expertise as a botanist and ecologist and it is the range of views of others that first attracted me to the concepts of wise use and responsible management of this important natural resource.

A personal journey

For good or bad, I have been a member of the peat family for most of my life with only a few minor deviations when I focussed on urban wildlife conservation in the UK and Malaysia and the ecology of Lake Naivasha and Hell's Gate National Park in Kenya.

Association with IPS

The first international peat conference I attended was the 9th Congress of the Internationale Gesellschaft für Moorforschung (IGM) that was held in Kesthely, Hungary in 1965. This Society was a predecessor of IPS that I joined around 1970 and attended my first IPC in Poznan in 1976, 36 years ago. I notice that a few of the participants in this room today were also at that meeting in Poland! I missed the 1980 Congress in Duluth, USA but since IPC7 in Dublin in 1984 I have attended every Congress.

I was elected to the new Executive Board of IPS at IPC10 in Bremen in 1996 and served for 8 years until 2008. I was Second Vice President from 2000-2004 and since 2008 I have been Chair of Commission IX Tropical Peatlands and Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board.

I have been involved in all of the discussions that led to publication of the Wise Use Book, the Strategy for Responsible Peatland Management and the Practical Guidelines for Implementing Wise Use of Peatlands.

EVOLUTION OF THE WISE USE OF PEATLANDS CONCEPT

Over the last 16 years IPS has changed its mission and strategy from a largely industry-based organisation to one that is a multi-stakeholder platform for discussion, exchange of views and advice to policy makers based on sound scientific information and reasoned debate.

This process commenced at the Bremen Congress in 1996 when the IPS Constitution was updated and the new style Executive Board was elected. Under the Presidency of Heinz-Dieter Becker-Platten a good relationship was established with the International Mires Research Group (IMCG) at

the workshop held in Surwold, Germany in 1997. This identified a wide range of issues of common interest and concern that led to further meetings in Freising, Germany resulting in the benchmark publication ‘Wise Use of Mires and Peatlands – Background and Principles including a Framework for Decision-making’ (WUMP), published in 2002 and edited by Hans Joosten and Donal Clarke.

An excellent guide to the concept of Wise Use of Peatlands is the joint IMCG-IPS statement of March 2002 that ‘highlights the nature and importance of peatlands and identifies problems resulting from their use. The challenge is to develop mechanisms that can balance the conflicting demands on the global peatland heritage to ensure its continued wise use to meet the needs of humankind’. Wise Use is defined as *‘those uses of mires and peatlands for which reasonable people now and in the future will not attribute blame’*.

After the Wise Use Book (WUMP)

The WUMP is a very specific technical document that details and explains the principles and criteria for the wise use of peat and peatlands. It provides a roadmap of steps to be taken in the decision process for peatland development and management. It also recommends that stakeholders use this framework when formulating their own proposals and action plans for using peatlands and peat. In this latter respect the WUMP is lacking in specific guidelines for different sector uses and practitioners have experienced difficulty in adapting it to their own exact requirements.

It was with the aim of providing the bridge between the more theoretical WUMP and the practical day to day activities of stakeholders that IPS launched a stakeholder-driven initiative in 2008 at the request of the European Peat and Growing Media Association (EPAGMA). This resulted in the ‘Strategy for Responsible Peatland Management’ (SRPM) that was launched in 2010, following 3 stakeholder workshops and three periods of extensive consultation.

This is now history and the SRPM has become accepted as the ‘benchmark’ upon which to base ‘best practice’ and ‘responsible management’ by governments, local authorities, peat extraction and growing media companies and peat and peatland certification organisations.

Guidelines for the Practical Application of Wise Use of Mires and Peatlands (PWUMP)

The WUMP is a comprehensive technical work that is considered by many too complex and difficult to implement for different sector purposes while the SRPM is an ‘action plan’ that requires adaptation for individual purposes. As an aid to the implementation of both, IPS is preparing a series of ‘Guidelines for the Practical Application of Wise Use of Mires and Peatlands’ that seek to simplify the language and explain the concepts and processes in lay terms. The use of simple language presents its own problems because some of the precision of the WUMP terminology may be lost or misinterpreted.

The PWUMP provides guidelines for the implementation of Wise Use and Responsible Management of mires and peatlands to resolve conflicts resulting from commercial uses for agriculture, energy, forestry and horticulture. It also makes suggestions for best practice in the restoration of peatlands after use has ended and highlights problems encountered in developing tropical peatland. These guidelines should be helpful to Government regulatory bodies, environmental agencies, state bodies charged with the conservation of peatlands, environmental management divisions of private and state-owned companies deriving commercial income from peatlands and peat, peatland managers working for any of these bodies, agencies or companies and NGOs and others involved in the conservation and/or restoration of peatlands.

Once their drafting is complete these guidelines will be circulated for further consultation later this year prior to their finalisation and publication.

EXAMPLES OF APPLICATION OF THE SRPM

EPAGMA

EPAGMA has been at the forefront of establishing a certification procedure for peat extraction since the early 2000s and suggested that IPS explore how this could be developed. A system was proposed by the Finnish consultancy company INDUFOR but it was deemed by the peat industry to be too complicated and costly. Instead, IPS facilitated the first stage of a potential certification procedure, namely, a global peatland strategy which later became the SRPM.

In 2008 EPAGMA published a 'Code of Practice' that its member companies sign up and adhere to in their businesses. This document contains important elements of the WUB and SRPM.

Canada

The Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss Association (CSPMA) that represents peat extracting and growing media manufacturing companies in Canada and USA has a long record of best practice in the supply chain of peat and peat-based products. This extends from site selection to restoration after use and CPSMA has published guidelines and information on all aspects of the supply chain. CPSMA has recently published a position paper on 'Sustainability: The Canadian Horticulture Peat Industry (2011)' that states that its members are 'committed to a sustainable management and development approach that provides environmental responsibility, economic viability and social accountability'.

The Netherlands

Within the framework of its Biodiversity Policy Plan (2008-2011) the Dutch Government has been working on agreements with selected Dutch trade sectors on enhancing sustainability in supply chains, including the peat supply chain linked to the Dutch horticulture sector. In this context sustainability means:

- a) Securing the long term supply of high quality peat to the horticulture sector or alternatives to peat;
- b) Making sure that biodiversity impacts of peat extraction are reduced to agreed levels;
- c) Reducing the supply chain's impacts on climate change (notably its carbon footprint).

This project and its report (2011) were co-ordinated by Alterra Research, Wageningen University, The Netherlands based on two stakeholder workshops and specialist papers prepared by experts in various fields related to the peat supply chain and its environmental implications. The report concluded 'that there is no convincing argument to refrain from using peat in professional horticulture as growing media in the short term'. It proposed a strategy consisting of the following five elements:

1. Exclude the use of peat from high biodiversity value peatlands;
2. Allow peat extraction from degraded peatland, but only if best practice measures are taken both during and after extraction;
3. Create transparency in GHG emissions related to peat-based products and peat extraction, compensating for the CO₂ footprint, if there is an industry willingness to do so;
4. Ensure that the future extraction of peat is only from degraded peatland;

5. Develop alternatives to peat in the long term.

On the basis of the second stakeholder workshop three follow-up actions were identified:

1. Transparency and implementation of responsible criteria in the peat supply chain (to be led by RHP in co-operation with IPS and other stakeholders);
2. Best practices of peatland after use (with IPS in the lead in co-operation with other stakeholders including ENGOs and industry);
3. Scenarios for the future availability of peat (with Alterra, Wageningen University in the lead in co-operation with the IPS National Committees in the Netherlands and Germany, industry, NGOs and others).

Responsible Companies

Some peat extraction and growing media companies have formulated and implemented statements and plans to make their business activities more transparent and show to society how they respect the environment. Other companies are considering following suit. In preparing these statements companies are leaning heavily on the information that is contained in the SRPM.

NEW AND EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESPONSIBLE PEATLAND MANAGEMENT

Certification of peat extraction and preparation and distribution of peat containing products

Canada

The Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss Association (CSPMA) has worked with Veriflora, a member of the Scientific Systems Group, to develop a certification system with 'Requirements for Responsible Horticultural Peat Moss Production and Handling' that was launched in 2011. The comprehensive criteria were developed after several months of stakeholder and public consultation that require Veriflora certified peat moss producers and handlers to manage all of their operations in an environmentally responsible manner. The certification criteria, based in part on ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 standards, address key environmental protection, social responsibility and product quality issues. At least six Canadian peat extraction and peat distribution companies are already certified under this scheme.

European Union

In the EU the move towards certification of peat extraction and peat products used in horticulture and other industries is lagging behind Canada, possibly because peat extractors, growing media manufacturers, retailers and users (plant growers, landscapers, gardeners) have not seen any urgency to embark upon this stricter control over the origin and use of peat and the after use planning of peat bogs. The situation is changing rapidly owing to pressure from the EU, national Governments, NGOs and consumers all of whom want greater transparency concerning the origin and environmental impact of peat and the use of peat products in various supply chains.

In the EU there is freedom of trade between countries but also regulation of markets, especially in terms of quality and standards of goods, products and services. There are procedures and

regulations to try to create 'level playing fields' for the production of and trade in a wide range of products, including peat, but if a single EU country takes unilateral action that changes this balance it becomes a matter of concern for the EU as a whole. At present there is a range of voluntary standards for growing media but no unified EU approach to peat certification.

The Netherlands

One of the follow-on projects identified in the Dutch Peat Supply Chain Report, 'Transparency and Implementation of Responsible Criteria in the Peat Supply Chain for Horticulture', has been started under the sponsorship of RHP (Association for Regulations on Commercial Potting Soils) and facilitated by Reinier de Man. The objective is to formulate draft principles and criteria for a responsible peat supply chain, which will be the basis for certifying growing media that contain peat and for certifying peat extraction sites that supply the growing media industry. These Principles and Criteria are being drafted by a group of private sector stakeholders from peat production, manufacturers of growing media, users of growing media and retail in close interaction with representatives of environmental NGOs and the IPS.

The goal of the Certification Scheme for Responsibly Produced Peat is to ensure that peat used as a constituent of growing media in both professional horticulture and the amateur gardening market can be guaranteed from responsible sources and that irresponsible sources are effectively excluded. The background for these Principles and Criteria is the IPS facilitated *Strategy for Responsible Peatland Management* (IPS 2010) and they also build upon the EPAGMA *Code of Practice* (EPAGMA 2009) and its seven core principles.

The geographical scope of these Principles and Criteria is peat used in the European (European Economic Area + Switzerland) industry for growing media, extracted in Europe and possibly some neighbouring countries (e.g. Belarus and Ukraine).

At present the Principles and Criteria contain requirements for responsible extraction of peat, including site selection and after-use but do not contain yet the supply chain from extraction site to end product and consumer. Neither does the draft include indicators of the basis on which compliance with the criteria will be measured but these will be formulated in 2012 following field testing of the criteria. The Principles and Criteria are structured into the following Chapters:

1. Legality
2. Good Governance
3. Site Selection
4. Site Preparation and Peat Extraction
5. After-Use
6. Manufacturing and Trade (to be dealt with at a later stage)

Central issues such as biodiversity and climate change are not covered in separate principles but are included in the criteria for legality, site selection, peat extraction and after-use. The Principles and Criteria place strict requirements on the various stakeholders in the peat supply chain, notably peat extracting companies, manufacturers and distributors of peat-based products that market and sell these products to professional users and private consumers.

Responsible Peat, if linked to peatland conservation and wise land use management, will provide a simple, transparent and verifiable system of certification that can be applied throughout the EU and beyond.

National Peatland Plans

This is a new development that should be followed by all countries with peatland. IPS supports the preparation of these plans as a means to identify and quantify the area of peatland and the amount of

carbon stored within it. They are also important to document the condition of peatlands, specify the minimum limits of peatlands of different types that should be conserved and identify drained and degraded peatlands and peatlands, for example those used for agriculture and forestry, that could be used for future peat extraction, followed by planned after use.

So far NAPPs exist for only Finland and Malaysia but there are major opportunities for other countries to follow this lead.

Finland

The National Strategy for Mires and Peatlands (MMM 2010) was co-ordinated by the Finland Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry through a broad-based working group consisting of members from ministries, research organisations, environmental and forest administrations, NGOs and ENGOs, Regional Council, Helsinki University and National Emergency Supply Agency.

The aim of the strategy is to define different objectives for the use of mires and peatlands in Finland and find ways to reconcile conflicts for the next decades by:

- Creating a common and up-to-date understanding of the diverse and sustainable use and management of mires and peatlands;
- Reconciling different needs and objectives for the use of mires and peatlands.

The strategy reveals that mires and peatlands in Finland occupy 9.3 million ha of which 4.76 Mha are used for forestry, 3.04 Mha are undrained, 1.13 Mha are legally protected, 0.33 Mha are used for agriculture while only 0.06 Mha are used for peat extraction. The document focuses on these different major land uses of Finland's mires and peatlands and identifies three important components of the strategy and its implementation:

- The need to improve the co-ordination of the different land uses needs on mires and peatlands;
- The need to formulate policies and implementation measures for the different uses of mires and peatlands;
- Identification of research needs.

Malaysia

Malaysia has put in place laws and regulations for the sustainable management of peatland that cover prevention of peat fires and loss of biodiversity. Malaysia will continue to contribute to the achievement of the ASEAN Peatland Management Initiative (APMI) and ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy (APMS). Malaysian policies and regulations on sustainable peatland management are governed by the following strategies:

1. Knowledge and understanding of peatlands;
2. Capacity and co-ordination;
3. Fires and haze prevention;
4. Integrated management;
5. National, state and regional co-operation;
6. Resources for protection and management.

The goal of the Malaysian NAPP is 'To sustainably manage peatlands in Malaysia in an integrated manner to conserve resources, prevent degradation and fires, and generate benefits for current and future generation'. The objectives by which to achieve this goal are:

1. Enhance knowledge, awareness and capacity for sustainable peatlands management and development;
2. Conserve peatlands resources and reduce peatland degradation and fires;

3. Promote the sustainable and integrated management of peatlands;
4. Ensure effective multi-stakeholder co-operation.

In order to implement this NAPP, it is important to have an effective institutional framework and the first step is to establish a National Steering Committee on Peatlands (NSCP), led by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (NRE). This will be the focal point to coordinate the implementation of the NAPP, including identifying and allocating responsibilities to relevant agencies at Federal and State levels. A draft action plan has already been prepared.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

In less than two years since it was published the SRPM has already had major effect on the approach of many stakeholders to policy formulation, certification, environmental statements and integrated peatland plans.

The SRPM is a standalone document that makes a coherent case for 'Responsible Peatland Management' linked to the fact that its implementation depends on the stakeholders who participated in its formulation and others incorporating parts or all of it in their own policies and activities on peatland and peat management. This is what is now happening as I have already mentioned in this presentation.

The requirement now is to determine which stakeholders are using the strategy and to what effect. All of the participating stakeholders should be asked this question and the replies assessed.

There are still many more stakeholders who probably have never heard of the SRPM and a way has to be found to inform them of it. This is a job for the special session on the SRPM that will be held on Friday morning but already I can think of a few possibilities to focus on.

1. The secretariat should identify international conventions, agencies and organisations (including ENGOs) with interests in peatland and/or peat.
2. National Committees should identify national and local (state, province, local authority) agencies and bodies and also ENGOs with interests in peatland and/or peat.
3. National Committees should identify within their area of operation companies that extract peat, manufacture growing media containing peat, use peat containing products in their businesses (growers, gardeners, distillers) or sell peat and peat containing products to the wholesale and retail markets, and also associations that represent the interests of all of these groups.
4. National Committees should prepare and send a press release about the SRPM and its importance to the media within their countries.
5. IPS Commissions should consider and report to the Scientific Advisory Board how the SRPM can be promoted through their activities and ensure their objectives take the SRPM fully into account.

IPS requires an action plan to promote the distribution and implementation of the SRPM. This will take time and cost money but it is essential. The IPS web site could be used as a major vehicle in this process and all National Committees and Commissions should post information about how they are delivering these actions.

IPS has an important role to play in the future especially in:

1. Finalising the Practical Guidelines for Implementing Wise use of Mires and Peatlands;

2. Collaborating in the formulation of certification procedures for peatland use and after use and standards for the preparation of peat-containing products;
3. Publicising these initiatives nationally, regionally and internationally; and
4. Forging new peat and peatland stakeholder partnerships in different parts of the world, for example, the Southern Hemisphere where there are exciting opportunities for mire and peatland conservation but also the need for wise use and responsible management.

There are many challenges to be met and we shall be hearing about some of these in more detail in the Technical Sessions this week and formulating a roadmap in the Special Session on the Strategy for Responsible Peatland Management on Friday morning on how to disseminate, inform and implement these initiatives.

The next major evaluation of our progress towards achieving these goals will be IPC15 in Kuching, Sarawak in 2016. Let's make sure we succeed!