



International Peatland Society

Annual Report 2020

Secretary General's Review

Looking back at 2020, it is easy to say that it was a truly extraordinary and almost surreal year. Not just for IPS and its members, but for literally every organization, every company and everyone in the world. While the first signs of Covid-19 had already emerged in late 2019, no one could have expected the extent of the global consequences that the emerging pandemic would have. During the first two months, the IPS still carried out its tasks in the usual manner, preparing for the International Peatland Congress, together with the Estonian National Committee, planning future meetings, working together with partners and members and strengthening the funding for the Society both for 2020 and for subsequent years.

The first (and last) physical IPS meeting of the year was the 3rd IPS Expert Group Meeting in Prague, at the beginning of March. Over two full days, 20+ experts from the IPS discussed the status, progress and future focus of IPS Expert Group work, as well as its contributions to the International Peatland Congress. At this point, Covid-19 was also a serious concern in Europe, but no one could have predicted what was to come. Only days after the meeting in Prague, the Czech Republic closed its borders, and many other countries followed suit.

Within a week of the meeting and following an official communiqué, issued by the Estonian Health Board, stating that all international events should be deferred, the inevitable decision was made: IPC2020 had to be postponed.

Consequently, every event, meeting, symposium or workshop, big or small, was either cancelled or postponed. It was, therefore, the first time in the 52 years of IPS history, that the National Committee Round Table and the Annual Assembly of National Representatives were held as online events. Similarly, presidential and Executive Board elections were carried out using online election tools. In these elections, Marko Pomerants was elected as the new President of the IPS, Guus van Berckel and Jack Rieley became first and second Vice Presidents, respectively. Ingrida Krigere and Tuija Vähäkuopus were elected as new EB members, while Donal Clarke, Paul Short and Erki Niitlan were re-elected.

In addition to the Congress, other events, significant for the IPS were cancelled or postponed, the Ramsar STRP, the RE3 congress, the GPI steering board meeting, the CBD COP15 and the UNFCCC COP26 being among the most important. On the positive side, the challenges led to the increased adoption of online events and meetings. While such virtual meetings can replace physical meeting only in part, it has already become evident that these are the new normal, and many types of basic meetings, webinars and other online events are likely to be here to stay.

Other effects of the pandemic on peat and peatland issues were many and various. While Covid-19 significantly affected, e.g., the transportation and logistics of raw materials, it also increased the demand for certain products,



The first and last picture of IPS face-to-face in 2020. Left to right: Bernd Hofer, Lydia Cole, Jack Rieley, Ingrida Krigere, Gerald Jurasinski, Marie Kofod-Hansen, Martin Küttim, Samu Valpola, Sabine Jordan, Peter Sale, Nina Kinnunen, Pete Whittington, Elve Lode, Erki Niitlaan, Ilze Ozola, Gilbert Ludwig, Marko Pomerants and Sakari Sarkkola. Photo: Susann Warnecke

such as growing media, especially in the hobby market. Have a look at Peatlands International 3.2020 to read more about the effects of the pandemic within our member countries.

As far as we can evaluate, peatland restoration and conservation activities in our member countries continued, where travel and lockdown restrictions allowed, but peatlands were probably not a top priority, as health concerns took over. On the other hand, many members now had the opportunity to spend much more time outdoors and began to appreciate the pristine mires of their surroundings, therefore, peatlands did appear in the news.

In addition to pandemic-related issues, the year has, in general, been tough on peat producers in Ireland and Finland, as production on the “green island” ceased completely, and tax policies in Finland led to a strong decrease in demand for energy peat. These developments will also have inevitable consequences on funding for the IPS.

On the positive side, the IPS and a group of around 20 authors have started work on the second edition of the Peatlands and Climate Change book. The first version of this work was published in 2008, therefore, this excellent book required updating. Publishing is scheduled for the autumn of 2021.

In March 2021, Jos Schouwenaars from the Netherlands took over the role of Coordinator of the IPS Expert Group of Peatlands in Agriculture. Since then, the group has been very

active, highlighting the general importance of agriculture in peatland management and climate mitigation.

The new IPS Strategy 2020-2024, as well as a formal NGO business plan were drafted and finalized in the last quarter of 2020. These documents set out the priorities and goals for the next quadrennium, and the ways in which these objectives shall be achieved. In its NGO operative plan, the IPS also clearly states its financial prerequisites, so that our organisation can ensure its activities and services long-term.

The end of the year was marked by the decision of the United Nations Environmental Programme to grant the IPS the status of a UNEP accredited organization. This accreditation is important in recognizing the IPS and its Strategy for Responsible Peatland Management at UN level.

I wish you success, and most importantly, good health for 2021. We warmly invite you to the International Peatland Congress in May!

Gilbert Ludwig

Secretary General
January 2019 - February 2021
gilbert.ludwig@peatlands.org

Report of the Executive Board

Main Activities

Conferences and Other Events

In March, travel restrictions were introduced all over Europe, therefore, the organizers of the International Peatland Congress decided, together with the Executive Board, to move the event to May 2021.

Later, in the autumn, we reorganized the Congress, making it a hybrid event with onsite and virtual participants. By the end of the year, some 220 abstracts for oral presentations had been submitted.

The third expert meeting of Commission Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Expert Group Coordinators, as well as a few members of the Executive Board, was held in Prague, Czech Republic, between 3rd and 5th March 2020. The meeting mainly dealt with the project proposals that were developed during the workshops at Heureka in Vantaa in August, and during the Baltic Peat Producers Forum in Palanga in autumn 2019.



New IPS President Marko Pomerants and Secretary General Gilbert Ludwig at the IPS Secretariat on 8 September. Photo: Susann Warnecke



Expert meeting in Prague. Photo: Susann Warnecke

The Annual Assembly of the IPS was held by email between 10th and 18th June 2020. Prior to that, the National Committee Chairs and Secretaries had the opportunity to exchange information during a virtual NC Round Table on 27th May.

The activities of our National Committees were mostly cancelled or held as online conferences. IPS representatives also attended a large number of virtual conferences of other organizers.

A list of IPS and related peat(land) events can be found in this report, and more information is included in the reports of the Commissions and National Committees in the appendices and on our website, when available.

The bidding process for the 2028 International Peatland Congress was moved to the autumn of 2021.

IPS Strategy and Structure

The Executive Board (EB) and the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) of the IPS continued to implement the “IPS Strategy 2016 - 2020”. In the autumn, the EB developed a new strategy as well as an NGO Business Plan for the period 2020-2024 and started to implement this important document.

The IPS was present at international conventions and other meetings of global importance, mostly virtually (many cancelled/postponed, see next page). The most significant of these in 2020 were the Ramsar STRP and the Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) meetings.

The role of peat in the horticulture industry, and its contribution to food security, remained an important issue. This is balanced with climate and biodiversity concerns, which are shared worldwide. IPS continues to strengthen its

efforts to achieve true professional, geographical, gender and age balances across all its bodies and activities, while also retaining current members, as generation change is significant in many areas.

Commissions

The work of the IPS is carried out by three Commissions and their Expert Groups. Their status at the end of 2020 was as follows:

Peatlands and Economy, Chair: Ingrida Krigere
 Peatlands for Agriculture: Jos Schouwenaars
 Peatlands for Forestry: Sakari Sarkkola
 Peat for Growing Media: Marck Hagen

Peatlands and Environment, Chair: Bernd Hofer
 Peatlands and Climate Change: Gerald Jurasinski
 Peatlands and Biodiversity: Lydia Cole
 Peatland Restoration: Pete Whittington
 Tropical Peatland Round Table: Jack Rieley

Peatlands and Society, Chair: Marie Kofod-Hansen
 Peatlands Culture, Education, Communication and Publicity: Ilze Ozola
 Peatland Conventions and International Affairs: Jack Rieley
 Peatlands and People: Dian Novarina

The IPS Commissions and their Expert Groups foster information exchange, suggest projects and initiate international conferences and other events. Commission membership is informal and open to all IPS members; contact should be made with the Chairs. All Commission Chairs are members of the SAB.

The reports of the Commissions and their Expert Groups will be published on the IPS website and in this report. All

contact details can be found in the same place:
www.peatlands.org/about-us/commissions-expert-groups-and-sab.

Conventions

As in previous years, members of the EB, Commission Chairs, the Secretary General and other experts participated in meetings and in the work of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Global Peatland Initiative (GPI), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), to name but a few.

It is one of the tasks of the IPS to present science-based facts to its members and stakeholders. This is best done in a face-to-face and balanced manner.

STRP Ramsar, originally planned for 18th - 22nd March, was cancelled. Two video meetings concerning Global Actions on Peatlands (GAP) were held in the autumn of 2020. Further meetings and results are expected in the spring of 2021.

All COPs (UNFCCC, CBD and Ramsar) were postponed until 2021, most of them until the end of the year. Gilbert Ludwig participated in two GLF online meetings in the summer and the autumn, both with a focus on the UN Decade of Restoration. The RE3, initially with an IPS contribution by Gilbert Ludwig, in Canada, was cancelled.

The GPI steering committee meeting and the GPI Annual Assembly (annual partners meeting) were postponed to 2021. On 5th December 2020, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governance Affairs Office confirmed the IPS' successful accreditation to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of UNEP. For further details, see Peatlands International 4.2020.

For a list of future convention meetings, visit www.peatlands.org/events.

IPS Projects

The IPS took over the last 24% payment charge for the 2018 project, "Peat for Food and Quality of Life, Future Peat Demand" (VAT). Additionally, the IPS continued its work on a new edition of the Peatlands and Climate Change book (editor: Maria Strack), which is planned to be published in autumn 2021.

As part of a large consortium (some 40 partners from 17 countries), the IPS participated in the EU Green Deal Horizon2020 project tender, "MERLIN", as an innovation action, addressing the call H2020-LC-GD-7-1-2020. Decision about funding success is expected in the spring of 2021.

IPS Membership

As of 31st December 2020, the IPS had 1,713 members in 33 countries, comprising 1,365 individual members, 209 corporations, 70 students and 45 honorary members (NCs



Covid-19 had a huge impact on IPS activities in 2020, but there were also positive aspects, such as virtual meetings. Photo: Julio Andres Rosario Ortiz

and IPS), as well as 13 research institutes, 10 governmental institutes and one NGO (new category).

Most members of the IPS live in Indonesia, Germany, Finland, Poland and the Netherlands. The membership list is updated in collaboration with our National Committees and directly by our members, at least once a year. In February, we published a special "List of Members for Members" with 374 contacts and details of their expertise. This was very well received. A new edition is planned for spring 2021.

The IPS is represented locally by 16 National Committees, with a total of 1676 members. Of these, 11 operate in Europe, three in Asia and two in North America. Sweden's National Committee was dissolved but will hopefully be re-established in 2021 as a research organization. Work continues to re-build a Russian National Committee, consisting of industry and science.

There are twenty men and six women serving as Chairs and Secretaries of National Committees. Operating on behalf of the IPS in countries with significant peatland resources and/or an active peatland or peat industry, the National Committees promote the environmental, societal and economic values of peatland and peat, and provide a forum for information exchange.

In other countries, the IPS has 19 individual members, eight corporate members, five student members, four honorary members and one institutional member. For full member statistics, see page 13. Anyone who is interested can join the IPS at www.peatlands.org/join-us.



Publications

Peatlands International

Four issues of the IPS magazine were published in 2020 and distributed to approximately 1,500 members by email. The Chief Editor was Secretary General, Gilbert Ludwig, and editing and layout tasks were carried out by the Assistant to the Editor, Susann Warnecke.

Three of our corporate members support the IPS by placing advertisements in the magazine. Members receive Peatlands International free of charge.

The magazine is supported by an Editorial Board, which consisted of the following members at the end of 2020:

- Rachel Carmenta, UK
- Lydia Cole, UK
- Catherine Farrell, Ireland
- Marie Kofod-Hansen, Sweden
- Juhani Päivänen, Finland
- Jack Rieley, UK
- Anne Jelle Schilstra, the Netherlands
- Paul Short, Canada
- Lech Szajdak, Poland
- Michael Trepel, Germany
- David Wilson, Ireland

A review of the Board is planned for February 2021. Previous

issues of Peatlands International can be found via the IPS document database at www.peatlands.org/publications/document-database, while most of the printed issues (before 2013) can be ordered from the IPS online store.

To publish in the magazine, please contact Susann Warnecke at susann.warnecke@peatlands.org. Deadlines are at the end of February, May, August and November.

Peatland Snippets

Twelve issues of the IPS newsletter, Peatland Snippets, were published in 2020. The monthly electronic newsletter of the IPS is sent out by email to around 1,500 members.

Older newsletters from 2002 to 2016 can be downloaded from the IPS document bank. Members and friends of the IPS are very welcome to contribute to the newsletter - just contact the IPS Secretariat.

Briefing Notes

In 2020, the IPS distributed three briefing notes (15 to 17) to all corporate members, to inform them of current developments at international level and other issues.

Mires and Peat Scientific Journal

During 2020, Mires and Peat published 30 peer reviewed articles (528 pages) in one standard volume (Volume 26),

by authors from 14 countries including one new country (Taiwan). The current (2019) Web of Science two-year Impact Factor (IF), published in mid-2020, is 1.328.

Volume 26 is the first volume to contain only submissions that arrived via Open Journal Systems; during 2020, all manuscripts were handled via OJS to a greater or lesser degree, depending on individual-editor preferences.

Olivia Bragg continued as Editor-in-Chief of the Journal. From the beginning of 2020, Jack Rieley continued as Deputy Editor-in-Chief (DEiC); Andy Baird, Gareth Clay, Dicky Clymo, Stephan Glatzel, Bartek Glina, Ab Grootjans, Mark Harrison, Jonathan Price and Katy Roucoux continued as regular Article Editors (ArtEs); Tom Kelly, Emma Shuttleworth and Charlie Stratford continued as Assistant Editors (AstEs) and Michael Trepel as Website Administrator.

On 1st July 2020, Sabine Jordan of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) took up the post of Deputy Editor-in-Chief, following a proposal by the IPS. As EIC of Telma, Sabine is experienced in managing articles through peer review and is rapidly familiarizing herself with the journal-specific procedures of Mires and Peat.

New suggestions/volunteers for the Editorial Board would be welcome, including one or two individuals who might consider taking on an ArtE role. The journal especially needs additional expertise in plant sciences (broad sense; taxonomy, physiology, phytosociology, ecology, etc.), as well as in the general field of engineering. More information is available in the full Report of the Editor (Bragg 2020).

Mires and Peat is the peer-reviewed, open-access scientific journal of the IPS and the IMCG, which is freely available at www.mires-and-peat.net to all those interested in peat, peatland and mire research. The IPS supports the journal with €5,000 annually via a foundation, overseen by Ab Grootjans.

Social Media

The IPS shares information about its own and related activities, press articles and conference announcements, via its Facebook and LinkedIn pages. In addition, the Secretariat posts on Instagram, mostly during IPS events.

At the end of 2020, 1,164 people, mostly aged between 25 and 34, were following the IPS on Facebook, the majority of whom were not members of the Society. Like us at www.facebook.com/peatlands. The community group on the same page had 114 members in early 2021.

The IPS LinkedIn group, which allows networking between around 563 peat and peatland professionals, has also proven to be a great tool for sharing and collecting information quickly and making new contacts. The now two-year-old IPS “company page”, which has 725 followers, enables even easier sharing of official information than via the group: www.linkedin.com/company/18665115.

IPS’ re-activated Twitter account had 130 followers in early 2021: www.twitter.com/ipspeatlands.



During spring, hiking became a hobby for many who had to give up indoor sports. Photo: Outi Hallamäki

Printed Publications

The IPS continued its successful online shop on the popular Holvi platform, which facilitates the purchase of around 60 publications, including proceedings, Peatlands International, the International Peat Journal and printed peat(land) books.

In 2020, we even sold 42 limited edition black face masks with the IPS logo (8 left). Book sales were slow initially but increased to the same level as the previous year. Visit www.holvi.com/shop/peatlands.

We also offer a 10% discount for members, the code for which is included in Peatland Snippets and Peatlands International.

Public Discussion

Covid-19, health, climate change, food security and the phasing out of energy peat were again important topics in the media in 2020, with respect to peatland management. Other topics varied slightly from country to country.

The IPS regularly follows Google Scholar alerts on peat, mire and peatland topics, and shares these on occasions via email with the EB, SAB, experts and National Committees, as well as in Peatland Snippets and on its Facebook or LinkedIn page.

Peat and Peatland Events

The following conferences, convention meetings and other international events were of relevance to the IPS and its members in 2020:

Finnish Peatland Society
3rd Finnish Peatland Day
Helsinki, Finland
31st January 2020
www.suoseura.fi

World Biodiversity Forum
Davos, Switzerland
23rd - 28th February 2020

3rd IPS expert meeting
3rd - 5th March 2020
Prague, Czech Republic

107th IPS EB meeting
27th and 30th March 2020, online

Finnish Peatland Society
Spring meeting
7th April 2020
www.suoseura.fi

Finnish Bioenergy Association
Spring meeting
16th April 2020, online
www.bioenergia.fi



Also interior design and gardening became incredibly important, with effects on sales. Photo: Severin Candrian

108th IPS Executive Board (EB) meeting
4th May 2020, online

EGU2020: Sharing geoscience online
4th - 8th May, online
www.egu2020.eu

IPS National Committee Round Table 2020
27th May 2020, virtual meeting

First World Peatlands Day
2nd June 2020, online
www.peatlands.org/event/world-peatland-day

GLF Bonn 2020: food in the time of climate crisis
Bonn, Germany and online
4th - 8th June 2020
<https://events.globallandscapesforum.org/bonn-2020>

IPS Annual Assembly
10th - 18th June, by email

Kick-off meeting of the new IPS EB
18th June, online

IPS SAB meeting 2/2020
18th June 2020, online

Malaysian Peat Society
10th Annual General Meeting
Sarawak Tropical Peat Research Institute
8th August 2020

110th IPS EB Meeting
27th August, online

IPS SAB meeting 3/2020
22nd September 2020, online

United Nations Summit on Biodiversity
"Urgent action on biodiversity for sustainable development"
New York, USA and online
30th September 2020
www.un.org/pga/74/united-nations-summit-on-biodiversity

111th IPS EB meeting
13th October 2020, online

GLF Biodiversity Digital Conference:
One World - One Health
28th - 29th October 2020, online
<https://events.globallandscapesforum.org/biodiversity-2020/>

SAB meeting 4/2020
16th November 2020, online

Bioenergy Association of Finland
Finnish Peat Day
Tampere and online
16th November 2020
www.bioenergia.fi

9th Asian Wetland Symposium
Suncheon, South Korea
23rd - 27th November 2020
<http://rrcea.org>

Dutch National Committee
Currency for Peat Programme Seminar
25th November, online

Finnish Peatland Society
Autumn meeting
1st December 2020
www.suoseura.fi

Finnish Peatland Society
Autumn seminar 2020
4th December 2020, online
www.suoseura.fi

IUCN UK Peatland Programme
Conference 2020
7th - 10th December 2020, online

112th IPS EB Meeting
9th December 2020, online

Malaysian Peat Society
10th Anniversary cum Christmas Celebration
Sarawak Tropical Peat Research Institute
21st December 2020

For all related events attended by IPS members, please visit www.peatlands.org/events, read the Commission and National Committee reports, as well as Peatlands International 1-4.2020.

Cooperation

The IPS cooperates internationally with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, FAO, UNFCCC, CBD, the Global Peatlands Initiative (GPI), the International Society for Horticultural Science (ISHS), the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER), the International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG) and the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS), as well as Growing Media Europe (GME) and the Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss Association (CSPMA).

Finances and Funding

The IPS is fully funded by membership fees, amounting to €148,000 in total. In addition, the IPS still benefits from the 15% commission payments of the International Peat Congress in Kuching (2016) and the Annual Convention in Aberdeen (2017), which have been used during the period 2018 - 2020. In addition, the IPS collects Secretary General contributions of €86,000 from 11 of its members and partners between 2019 and 2021.

The income statement of the IPS shows a deficit of €9,200 for the 2020 financial year. This is in line with the budget, gradually using the 2017 surplus of €81,000 to fulfil the IPS strategy and taking bad debts, as well as 2020 travel restrictions, into consideration.



Most meetings in 2020 were held virtually. Photo: Chris Montgomery

However, income was heavily influenced by the situation of Bord na Móna - therefore, we had to write off €55,000 of unpaid membership fees at the end of the year. Ironically, the IPS thus almost “benefitted” from Covid-19, as travel costs were extremely low and saved funds could be used to cover bad debts at the end of the year. However, this situation is not sustainable in the long-term.

The IPS continues to search for additional core and project funding from outside sources. The total income of the IPS was €245,000, with expenditure amounting to €254,000. The depreciation in the value of equipment amounted to €225 (25%). Assets and liabilities were €209,000 on 31st December. More details can be found in the financial appendices of the Annual Report.

With regard to the future, there is some uncertainty regarding the payment of the outstanding debts of 2020 and certain of the forthcoming 2021 fees. We expect to receive the outstanding payments from National Committees and industry partners during the first months of 2021, before the Annual Assembly.

The accounts and financial statements of the IPS were audited by authorized public accountant, Jenni Kovanen of Inkeröinen and Himanen Oy.

Administration

Annual Assembly

The Annual Assembly of National Representatives was held by email between 10th and 18th June 2020 and attended by representatives of 14 National Committees (Canada, China, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK and the USA) and 16 observers. A National Committee Round Table was held by video conference on 27th May, attended

by 13 NC representatives and 20 other members. The Assembly confirmed the Annual Report of 2019, the plan of activities, budget and membership fees for 2020 and the interim budget and membership fees for 2021. The Assembly also elected the Auditors for the IPS for 2019 and 2020.

Most importantly, the Assembly elected a new EB for the period 2020 - 2024. As a result, Marko Pomerants from Estonia was elected President and successor of Gerald Schmilewski, Jack Rielew became second Vice President, and

Tuija Vähäkuopus as well as Ingrida Krigere joined the EB as new ordinary members, while Samu Valpola left the EB. We warmly thank Gerald and Samu for their dedicated work within the IPS over many years!

National Committees

At the end of the year, the IPS was represented locally by the following National Committee Chairs and Secretaries in 16 countries. The Swedish NC left as of 31 December 2020 but plans to rejoin in 2021.



Peatland is a terrestrial wetland ecosystem in which the production of organic matter exceeds its decomposition and a net accumulation of peat results.



Peatlands occur in every climatic zone and continent. They cover approximately 4 million square km, which is 3% of the Earth's land surface.



Peatlands interact with climate through the uptake and release of greenhouse gases. They are important carbon stores.



Peatlands provide ecosystem services. They are important in themselves, for environment, economy and society.

Canada

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China

Dr Meng Wang, wangm581@nenu.edu.cn
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Estonia

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Finland

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Sanna Piilo, suoseura49@gmail.com
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Prof. Jack Rieley, jack.rieley@btinternet.com

USA

Rich Hendricks, rich@crushingmechanics.com
Don Grubich, donaldgrubich@gmail.com

National Committee and Commission reports are published on the IPS website and in this report. The most up to date contact details are available at www.peatlands.org/about-us/national-committees.

Executive Board

The 11-person EB currently consists of six members with an industrial background, while five come from the science community. They comprise seven men and four women, or nine Europeans, one Asian and one North American.

The members of the EB at the end of 2020 and their terms of office were/are as follows:

President

Marko Pomerants, Estonia, 2020-2024
marko.pomerants@peatlands.org

First Vice President

Guus van Berckel, the Netherlands, 2020-2024
g.vanberckel@griendtsveen.de

Second Vice President

Jack Rieley, United Kingdom, 2020-2024
jack.rieley@peatlands.org

Ordinary Members:

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Sabine Jordan, Sweden | 2018-2022 |
| Lulie Melling, Malaysia | 2018-2022 |
| Frank Tamminga, Germany | 2018-2022 |
| Erki Niitlaan, Estonia | 2020-2022 |
| Donal Clarke, Ireland | 2020-2024 |
| Ingrida Krigere, Latvia | 2020-2024 |
| Paul Short, Canada | 2020-2024 |
| Tuija Vähäkuopus, Finland | 2020-2024 |

Professor emeritus, Juhani Päivänen, Honorary President of the IPS, also has the right to attend all EB meetings. In addition, Dedi Nursyamsi from Indonesia and Meng Wang from China were approved observers in 2020. All, and the Secretariat, can be reached at eb@peatlands.org.

The key administrative meetings of the IPS EB in 2020 were held in on 27th and 30th March, 4th May, 27th August, 13th October and 9th December, all of them online via MS Teams.

The decisions of these meetings were disseminated through Peatland Snippets and Peatlands International and by email to the National Committees and Commissions.



Scientific Advisory Board

The SAB held its second expert meeting in Prague, Czech Republic between 3rd and 5th March 2020, attended by the Commission Chairs, Vice Chairs and Expert Group Coordinators. The meeting was very productive. A fourth meeting is planned when funding and travel restrictions allow.

The SAB provides the IPS with advice and information on matters of scientific, technical and cultural importance, drawing upon the pool of knowledge available from the Commissions and elsewhere, along with promoting and disseminating research results.

This group usually meets twice a year in conjunction with other IPS meetings. As in previous years, the IPS has provided funding for travel of up to €500 per member. This amount was increased in 2018-2020 to make expert meetings possible, as long as extra funds were available.

Members of the SAB at the end of 2020 were as follows:

Chair:

Jack Rieley, United Kingdom, Second Vice President

Members (Commission Chairs):

Ingrida Krigere, Peatlands and Economy, Latvia
Bernd Hofer, Peatlands and Environment, Germany
Marie Kofod-Hansen, Peatlands and Society, Sweden

Secretariat and Staff

The IPS Secretariat is situated in the StartUp Leipomo Centre for Young Enterprises at Nisulankatu 78 B, 40720 Jyväskylä, Finland; mobile: +358 40 418 4075; email: ips@peatlands.org or firstname.lastname@peatlands.org.

Full-time Secretary General, Dr Gilbert Ludwig, continued his work until the end of February 2021. His tasks were mainly conventions, ensuring IPS' funds and leadership.

Susann Warnecke took care of the administration, communications, event management and finance of the IPS, supported by the accounting office, TietoAkseli, the Auditor and IT, as well as other service providers. Her title was changed from Communications Manager to Head of Communications and Finance Administration in October 2020 to better reflect her actual tasks.

From March to December 2020, the IPS staff have worked from their home offices.

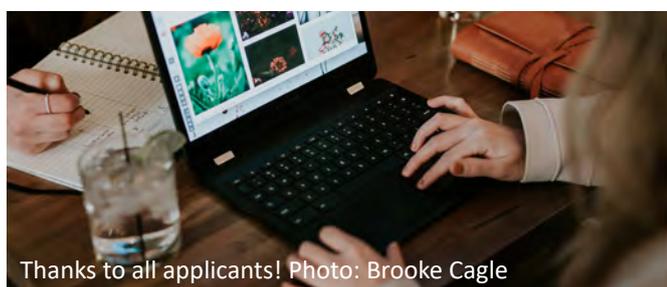
Honours

Allan Robertson Grants for Research Students and Young Professionals

In 2020, the IPS sponsored the "Allan Robertson Grants for Research Students and Young Professionals" (€500) with a budget of €5,000. Altogether 27 applications were submitted.

Funding was made available from the IPS, with generous contributions from IPS members and the National Committees of UK and Estonia. The winners were:

- Dael Sassoon, University of Manchester: ecosystem dynamics of Amazonian open peatlands during the Late Holocene
- Clare Profous, Masters Student at NUI Galway (Human Rights Law): Ireland's Just Transition Plan - The Midlands
- Thomas Newman, University of Leicester: carbon loss from agricultural fen peatlands in the UK
- Sanna Piilo, University of Helsinki: attending IPC2020 and presenting my research in Tallinn
- Monika Ruwaimana, University of Oregon: tropical peat researcher from Indonesia
- Made Dirgantara, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, University of Palangka Raya: sustainability of tropical peatlands: fires mitigation
- Farina de Waard, University of Greifswald, Institute of Botany and Landscape Ecology: global distribution and



Thanks to all applicants! Photo: Brooke Cagle

- patterns of fire on peatlands
- Mareille Wittnebel, Thünen Institute of Climate-Smart Agriculture: soil organic carbon stocks of managed peat soils in Germany
- Benjamin Freeman, Bangor University: first conference for PhD student research on responsible peatland management
- Hannes Keck, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences: investigating controlling variables of greenhouse gas fluxes from agricultural peatlands

Reports of the 2020 winners will be published in Peatlands International in 2021. Of the 2019 winners, eight reports out of ten were received and published in 2020.

The deadline for the 2021 Allan Robertson Grants is 31st January, and the new winners will be announced in March, in relation to projects and to attend our Congress.

Additional funds were not collected in 2020. Crowdfunding was considered an option.

Honorary Members

At the end of the year, the IPS had 22 honorary members. Honorary membership is conferred by the EB on persons nominated primarily by National Committees, who have made outstanding contributions to the IPS and to international cooperation on peatlands and peat. The current honorary members are as follows:

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Belarus: | Ivan I. Lishtvan |
| Canada: | Jean-Yves Daigle, Gerry Hood |
| Finland: | Matti Hilli, Markku Mäkelä, Yrjö Pessi, Juhani Päivänen, Jaakko Silpola, Raimo Sopo |
| Germany: | Gerfried Caspers, Hartmut Falkenberg |
| Hungary: | F. Baranyai |
| Ireland: | Paddy Hughes |
| Latvia: | Ansis Snore |
| Poland: | Piotr Ilnicki |
| Russia: | A.K. Dergunov, B.N. Sokolov |
| United Kingdom: | Richard Clymo, Neil Godsman |
| USA: | Don N. Grubich, Tom Malterer, Nick van de Griendt |

Attachments

Member Statistics
Commission Reports
National Committee Reports
Financial Report
Signatures
Auditor's Statement

Susann Warnecke

Head of Communications and Finance Administration
Acting Secretary General March-June 2021
susann.warnecke@peatlands.org

Membership Statistics

| | Individual members | Corporate Members | Research Institutes, Universities | Governmental Institutes | NGOs | Honorary Members | Students | TOTAL |
|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|------|------------------|----------|-------|
| Indonesia | 431 | | | | | | | 431 |
| Germany | 282 | 43 | 5 | 6 | | 11 | 42 | 389 |
| Finland | 255 | 16 | | | | 11 | 11 | 293 |
| Poland | 99 | 3 | | | | 1 | | 103 |
| The Netherlands | 52 | 14 | 5 | 1 | | 2 | 1 | 75 |
| Japan | 46 | | | | | | 4 | 50 |
| Malaysia | 41 | 5 | | | | | 1 | 47 |
| United Kingdom | 28 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 43 |
| Estonia | | 38 | | | | 1 | | 39 |
| Latvia | 8 | 23 | | | | 7 | | 38 |
| Canada | 10 | 25 | | | | 2 | 1 | 38 |
| China | 33 | | | | | | | 33 |
| Ireland | 29 | 1 | | 1 | | | 1 | 32 |
| USA | 20 | 4 | | 1 | | 3 | | 28 |
| Lithuania | 2 | 21 | | | | | | 23 |
| Ukraine | 10 | 3 | 1 | | | | | 14 |
| 1st January 2021 | 1346 | 201 | 12 | 10 | 1 | 41 | 65 | 1676 |
| 1st January 2020 | 1361 | 219 | 13 | 10 | 2 | 42 | 64 | 1711 |
| 1st January 2019 | 1021 | 216 | 11 | 12 | | 41 | 62 | 1363 |
| 1st January 2018 | 1048 | 218 | 12 | 11 | | 39 | 59 | 1387 |

(12 via Bery)

| | Individual Members | Corporate Members | Students | Honorary Members | NGOs | Research Institutes, Universities | Governmental Institutes | TOTAL |
|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------|------------------|------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------|
| Norway | 2 | 2 | | | | 1 | | 5 |
| Russia | 2 | 1 | | 2 | | | | 5 |
| Sweden | 5 | | | | | | | 5 |
| Denmark | 1 | 2 | 1 | | | | | 4 |
| Singapore | 2 | | 1 | | | | | 3 |
| Belgium | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 2 |
| France | | 2 | | | | | | 2 |
| Hungary | 1 | | | 1 | | | | 2 |
| Italy | 2 | | | | | | | 2 |
| Spain | 2 | | | | | | | 2 |
| Australia | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Austria | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Belarus | | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Chile | 1 | | | | | | | 1 |
| Peru | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| 1st January 2021 | 19 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 37 |
| 1st January 2020 | 22 | 11 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 44 |
| 1st January 2019 | 23 | 10 | 6 | 4 | | 1 | | 44 |
| 1st January 2018 | 23 | 12 | 9 | 4 | | 2 | | 50 |
| | 1365 | 209 | 70 | 45 | 1 | 13 | 10 | 1713 |

| | Jan-21 | Jan-20 | Jan-19 | Jan-18 | Jan-17 | Balance |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| NC members | 1676 | 1711 | 1363 | 1387 | 1441 | -35 |
| Non-NC members | 37 | 44 | 44 | 50 | 54 | -7 |
| | 1713 | 1755 | 1407 | 1437 | 1495 | -42 |

The National Committees of Belarus, CZ, and Russia are suspended until membership fees are paid.
The Norwegian NC ceased as of January 2016, Sweden as of 31 December 2020 (being restructured).

This Annual Report will be presented to the Annual Assembly 2021 in May and published on the IPS website at www.peatlands.org together with the official Financial Statement and Auditors Report.

Commission Reports

Peatlands and Economy

Chair: Ingrida Krigere

Vice-Chairs: Maurice Doyon, Meng Xianmin

Expert Groups (EG):

- Peatlands for agriculture, DEng., Jos Schouvenaars
- Peatlands for forestry, Dr of Agriculture and Forestry, Sakari Sarkkola
- Peat for growing media, Nina Kinnunen (until 21st September), Marck Hagen (from October 2020)

Meetings and participation in 2020

1. Meeting with members of the European Commission - Green Deal and discussion about the horticultural peat role in food production and forestry. Trends in peat use change. Difference between energy peat and horticultural peat.
2. Contribution to IPC, I participate in the international scientific committee of the Congress
3. SAB meeting in Prague (live) and four online meetings
4. Meetings of Expert Groups



Young plants growing in peat. Photo by Jorien Loman

In order to collect reliable data, the Economy Commission of IPS has produced a data collection sheet. A questionnaire was sent to all peat-producing countries to collect industry-relevant data on peat extraction volumes, horticultural peat and energy peat, employees in the peat sector and the main export and import markets.

To date, five countries have responded. We hope that the industry will understand the importance of this data and that they are necessary in the interests of the industry itself.

The information will be used for IPS reports and presentations at convention level, in communication with government institutions, in dialogues with environmental NGOs, in discussions regarding Green Deal and within the industry itself. The results of our survey will also be presented at IPC2021. We are planning articles on peat extraction, changes in the use of peat and specific features of different countries in the field of peat extraction, processing and use.

EG Peatlands for agriculture

Dr Eng. Jos Schouvenaars (leading from 2020)

Nine experts, five online meetings were held in 2020

As the new Coordinator of the EG on Peatlands and Agriculture, Jos Schouvenaars started his work with two actions: 1) to try and obtain an actual view of the most relevant and urgent topics in agricultural peatland use and 2) to get in touch with IPS members, who are potentially able to contribute to the activities of the EG. Current issues were identified, and experts were involved.

The IPS recognizes that the agricultural use of peatlands is an important topic, both in relation to food security and in relation to climate change, i.e., reduction of GHG emissions.

One of the first activities of the EG is to make an inventory of the most important actual questions and challenges related to the agricultural use of peatlands in different regions/countries.

With this inventory the EG hopes to acquire a global picture of regional differences and similarities in

- regulations and policies for responsible peatland use and the related challenges and incentives for transitions in land use
- corresponding challenges and perspectives for agricultural enterprises, small farmers and local communities.

For this survey, we developed a questionnaire which was sent to the National Committees of IPS with the request

to approach selected members, representing different stakeholders (farmers' organizations and agricultural enterprises; local, regional and national governmental organizations; local and regional NGOs working on the environment, climate and socio-economic development; research institutes), for a contribution to the survey.

Data collection and obtaining answers has not been easy. Currently, 19 participants from 10 countries have responded. The EG has had two meetings to discuss the results and the way forward.

As a task for the next few years, the EG will select some of the relevant strategic goals and activities which are mentioned in the Strategy 2020-2024, and will consider them more elaborately using the EG's capabilities.

EG Peat for growing media

Nina Kinnunen (until 21st September 2020)
Marck Hagen (from October 2020)
Twelve experts

Several online meetings were held and the EG decided upon the main topics on which to focus in the future: peat in the circular economy; safety of growing media (GM); GM and human health; hobby sector - what values can 1 m³ peat or peat GM create when used in hobby gardening; transparency - gathering statistics that show what is currently grown in peat GM. The importance of peat GM for growing the forestry plants requires a study of the value chain for the forest industry.

In 2021, experts must be actively involved and work on the set tasks must be continued.

The EG has worked out the idea of a new project, "Solutions for recycling of peat based growing media". Peat extraction and its usage for GM is under threat since it is conceived as a CO₂ problematic constituent. The industry needs to increase the level of CO₂ binding solutions and the connection with the circular economy, in order to improve the LCA of peat and to gain social acceptance for the use of peat as GM.

The objective is to find ways of ensuring that carbon in peat-based GM can be captured and utilized in a way that supports the circular economy and ensures sustainable food production.

EG Peatlands for forestry

Sakari Sarkkola
Seventeen experts

The EG promotes rational discussion, as well as information exchange relating to the responsible management of peatland forests globally.

Several topics regarding peatlands and forestry were discussed, for example, the impact of partial harvest on CH₄ and N₂O balances of a drained boreal peatland forest and

refining the role of phenology in regulating gross ecosystem productivity across European peatlands.

Certain joint formal discussions within the EG were held via skype and email in 2020. There is a plan to organize a symposium concerning peatland forestry in 2021. A new textbook project (peatland forestry) has started in Finland (in the last phase in Finnish, promoter J. Päivänen). Active preparations for the Congress are ongoing.

Peatlands and Environment

Chair: Bernd Hofer
Vice Chairs: Maria Strack, Budi Indra Setiawan

Introduction

As is traditional, 2020 started with the meeting of the SAB, some EG coordinators, the IPS Secretariat and some representatives of the EB. The meeting was held in Prague on 3rd - 5th March and was an optimistic start to the year.

However, initial thoughts were given to what consequences the spreading Covid-19 pandemic might have for the IPC. Immediately after the meeting, the borders of the Czech



Photo: Zane Lee

Republic were closed because of Covid-19 and from then on, the year went completely differently than usual, not only for the Commission and the IPS.

Communication in the IPS is usually digital to a large extent, especially between continents. But the loss of the occasional face-to-face meetings and direct exchanges has made it clear, at least to me over the past few months, what inspiring moments these personal encounters can be and what motivation arises from them.

With an International Peatland Congress in Tallinn, the IPS year would certainly have been very different. So, what took place besides Coronavirus?

Prague Meeting

In addition to the reports from the Commissions and the almost customary reflections on how to activate participation in the Commissions, the following topics were presented and discussed:

- Peat Exit Strategy: case studies from Germany (Bernd Hofer) and the United Kingdom (Jack Rieley)
- IPC: summary of Commission activities
- Short introduction to potential projects resulting from the Peat Concept 2050 workshops in Vantaa and Palanga in 2019

As a guest, Peter Sale from the UK presented his project entitled 'facilitating the use of damaged peatlands in commercial carbon capture and storage'. Possibilities for practical implementation in some countries, such as Finland and Germany, were discussed.

In addition to a variety of organizational tasks, and as result of the Prague meeting, the Commission has set itself the task of preparing an initiative paper on the Peat Concept 2050.



Photo: Gunnar Riddarström

Peatlands and Biodiversity Expert Group (EG):

Coordinator: Lydia Cole

Current activities

The main activities completed by the Peatlands and Biodiversity EG have been providing feedback on SAB initiatives, updating the Biodiversity page on the IPS website, providing reports as requested, providing a short article for Peatlands International (PI) and contributing to organizing thematic sessions for IPC2021. I have carried out these activities without asking for help from any of the experts in the group (aside from the PI article, co-authored with Susan Page and Mark Harrison), as I did not think their help was appropriate or necessary for these activities.

Proposed future activities

I plan to coordinate the completion of the following activities by the Peatlands and Biodiversity EG by the end of 2022:

- A blog post for the IPS website (January 2021)
- An article for PI (March 2021)
- Assisting with activities for IPC2021 (more details below)
- Getting involved with COP26 activities if there is an opportunity (suggestions for events were sent to Gilbert Ludwig in March 2020)
- Assisting with reviewing reports and initiatives, e.g., IPS Peat Concept 2050, from the IPS SAB and elsewhere, as requested
- Assist with creating a more structured work plan for this EG and others (if other EG coordinators would find this useful) over the course of a year, to help with time allocation amongst coordinators and with continuity and effectiveness of IPS SAB initiatives
- Identify, as a Commission/SAB, a strategy for engaging experts, considering what they can expect from the IPS and what the IPS can expect from them.

I think that having a clearer work plan for the EGs (as suggested above) that sets out a schedule for their activities over a year, will help to structure engagement with experts.

I appreciate we have developed the following documents to guide work with experts: 'Requirements for Expert Group Members' and 'SOP - Expert Groups - Reviewing Documents', but I think there is still work to be done to coordinate the 'use' of experts within the SAB.

Plans for IPC2021

Leading up to and during the IPC2021, the Peatlands and Biodiversity EG plans to:

- Coordinate a Tropical Peatlands thematic session, with Mark Harrison and Simon Husson (Borneo Nature Foundation)
- To report on this session, in the form of a blogpost for the IPS website or an article for PI
- Assist, as required by the IPC2021 Scientific & Coordinating Committee, with any biodiversity-related sessions
- Encourage further experts to submit abstracts, as required.

I look forward to feedback on these proposed activities, and to completing them successfully!

Peatlands and Climate Change Expert Group

Coordinator: Gerald Jarusinski
 No report was submitted.

Peatland Restoration Expert Group

Coordinator: Pete Whittington and Maria Strack (Vice Chair)

In Canada, we held a series of virtual workshops on Canadian peatlands in relation to the Global Peatland Initiative:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/water-institute/news/water-institute-hosts-global-peatlands-initiative-canadian>.

This involved presentations from peatland stakeholders including IPS members like Paul Short for the CSPMA.

I (and others in the Commission) have also been actively working on the Peatlands and Climate Change book update (second edition). Please contact me if you would like a short report on this activity.

Peatlands and Society

Not yet received, see website for late submissions, www.peatlands.org/about-us/commissions-expert-groups-and-sab.



Photo: Steven Cordes

National Committee Reports

China

In 2020, under the leadership of our President, Professor Shengzhong Wang, the China National Committee appointed a new EB in early 2020. There are 33 individual members in our National Committee, most of whom are from universities and research institutes. Our new National Committee has brought substantial changes to our primary missions, from focusing on the wise use of peat resources to peatland conservations.

During 2020, Covid-19 had a severely adverse impact on peatland research and business in China in the spring, but the situation was substantially improved from early May. During quarantine, our National Committee worked closely with peatland research communities and business partners by means of virtual conferences and video meetings to keep people connected.

With the support of the China National Committee, the only peatland-oriented society in China, the Peatland Society of Jilin Province appointed a new EB in November 2020, with high-profile EB members from peatland research communities. The new EB members were invited to participate in the China Wetland Natural Reserve Summit, the China Peatland Forum and the Forum of Physical and Human Geography of Changbai Mountains, to convey the importance of peatland as carbon stocks and biodiversity hotspots under the changing climate.

Our EB members also attended the China Greenhouse Industry Conference to promote the substitution of peat substrate with coir, for the sake of peatland conservation and peatland industrial transformation. Being invited as

an observer to the EB of the IPS, our Secretary General, Professor Meng Wang, worked closely with IPS and was dedicated to the responsible management and wise use of peat and peatland resources globally.

Our working priority in 2021 is to facilitate peatland research and industrial transformation in China. If the global situation regarding Covid-19 is settled, the China National Committee will organize our members to participate in the on-site Congress in Tallinn (now online).

The China National Committee promises to communicate actively with the IPS to initiate preparations for the 2024 IPC in China.

Finland

The year 2020 marked the 71st anniversary of the Society. The regular activities of spring and autumn meetings as well as the autumn seminar were organized online. On 31st January, we organized the third National Peatland Day. As the international IPS conference was postponed until the year 2021, the related excursion of the Finnish Peatland Society was also postponed. The autumn seminar was organized, focusing on the sustainable use of peatlands in the future and was combined with a student workshop. The 71st volume of the journal *Suo - Mires and Peat* was published. The Annual Assembly of the IPS was held online on 27th May as a Round Table meeting and Samu Valpola represented the Finnish Peatland Society. The Chair and the Secretary of the National Committee also attended the meeting, and Tuija Vähäkuopus, a board member of the Finnish Peatland Society, was elected as a member of the EB of the IPS.

Meetings, seminars and a student workshop

The third National Peatland Day was organized on 31st January 2020 at the House of Science and Letters in Helsinki. The core organizing team consisted of Dr Anna Laine-Petäjäkangas, Dr Maija Lampela and Dr Markku Koskinen.

The theme of the National Peatland Day focused on peatlands in a changing world. The keynote speakers were Asst. Prof. Annalea Lohila, who talked about the role of peatlands in the changing climate, Dr Jyrki Jauhiainen spoke about the destruction and amendment possibilities of tropical peatlands, and Dr Kaisa Mustonen presented a case study of water and peatland conservation from a landscape



People's Square in Shanghai, China.
Photo: Marco Montero Pisani

perspective. A dance artist, Annatuuli Saine and the Saine Ensemble presented a peatland themed dance and music performance at the end of the morning session. The afternoon consisted of two parallel sessions. Altogether, 40 scientific presentations were held during the day, and 84 people from more than 20 different organizations attended the conference; some people watched the presentations via a live stream.

The spring meeting was organized for 7th April, the autumn meeting for 1st December and the autumn seminar for 4th December online through Zoom. The topic of the autumn seminar was the sustainable use of peatlands in the future. Prof. Kristiina Regina, from the Natural Resources Institute Finland (LUKE), discussed the topic of agriculture and peat soils. Dr Paavo Ojanen from the University of Helsinki talked about the impact of climate on forestry-drained peatlands. MSc Hannu Salo from Bioenergia ry discussed the transition of the peat extraction sector, MSc Eerika Tapio from Metsähallitus presented a project of peatland restoration and Dr Anna Salomaa from the University of Helsinki discussed the contradictions of peatland policies and politics. A short general discussion was held after the presentations. Altogether 83 people attended the online seminar.

With the aid of the Metsämiesten Säätiö Foundation, we organized a student workshop after the autumn seminar. Thirty-six students in total from the University of Helsinki, University of Jyväskylä and South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences (XAMK) participated in the workshop. The board members of the Finnish Peatland Society, together with Prof. Harri Vasander led the discussions of the various themed student groups. The written outcomes of the workshop will be published in the journal *Suo - Mires and Peat* in the spring of 2021. The students will give presentations of their outcomes in the spring seminar of 2021 or in a separate seminar.

Germany

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all 2020 DGMT events were cancelled, including the planned peatland excursion to Estonia in June and unfortunately, also the prestigious 50th anniversary ceremony of our society. We very much hope to stage both events in the near future. At least a number of online events and conferences took place, in which the DGMT and its members were involved. A special focus was given to the peatland protection strategy of the German government.

Currently, there are plans for two events in 2021. The intention is to hold a two-day symposium on the subject of "cultural heritage and nature conservation in peatlands" in June and the annual meeting of the DGMT will take place in Baden-Württemberg in September.

In 2020, the DGMT homepage was revised (www.dgmtv.de). Here information and news are provided.

TELMA 50, our national journal, published annually with articles and reports relating to peat, mire and peatlands was sent to all members in December 2020. The process

of publishing older TELMA articles online continues. More than 200 articles, published in previous TELMAs, are already available at <https://e-docs.geo-leo.de/handle/11858/6421>

A special edition, planned for the 50th anniversary of the DGMT, which provides a review of the Society's history and information relating to its key events, written by members, was realized and will be published in the near future.

At the end of November, there was a change in the Society's management board: Prof. Dr Joachim Blankenburg resigned from his position as the Society's second Chairman. He held this position for 27 years, which was the longest term of office of all members active on the board. We are very grateful for his commitment and for all the work and organization he has conducted on behalf of our Society. Until the election of a successor at the next annual DGMT meeting, the Chair of Section 1, Prof. Dr Jutta Zeitz, has taken over the post of the second Chairman.

Malaysia

The Malaysian Peat Society (MPS) plays a pivotal role in promoting and supporting conferences and publicizing the insightful and sustainable use of peat and peatlands in the country, through its activities. Despite a challenging year in 2020, due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the MPS managed to successfully carry out a number of significant activities last year.

The 10th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the MPS was delayed because of Covid-19 and was only convened on 8th August 2020 at the Sarawak Tropical Peat Research Institute,



Lulie Melling during field work in Sarawak in August 2020. Photo: MPS

subject to stringent adherence to the SOP for meetings. Due to travel restrictions at the time of the meeting, outstation members were able to participate virtually in the meeting via video conferencing.

The AGM reviewed and discussed the reports of the Secretary and Treasury General, proposed a budget and a plan of activities, and appointed auditors for the 2020 financial year. Additionally, a proposal to review and update the MPS Constitution was also presented during the meeting and the proposed amendments were duly passed.

Another more memorable event of the MPS last year was the 10th Anniversary cum Christmas Celebration which was held on 21st December 2020 at the Sarawak Tropical Peat Research Institute.

The event was graced by the presence of YAB, Chief Minister of Sarawak, Datuk Patinggi (Dr) Abang Haji Abdul Rahman Zohari Tun Abang Haji Openg who cut the 10th Anniversary cake. MPS members and several invited guests came together to commemorate this special moment which highlighted the 10-year journey of the MPS, since its establishment on 21st May 2010.

The major highlights of the Anniversary Celebration were the awards, which were given out that evening. Four prestigious awards were given during the event: (1) Partnership award, (2) Environmental Sustainability award, (3) Young Peat Scientist award, and (4) Publication award:

1. Partnership Award - the award was given in recognition of the stakeholders for their unwavering support towards the successful growth of the MPS.
2. Environmental Sustainability Award - the award was given in recognition of the stakeholders for their support and commitment in promoting the wise use and responsible development of peatlands.
3. Young Peat Scientist Award - the award was given in recognition of the young scientists who are dedicated to peat research and demonstrated leadership skills in their work.
4. Publication Award - the award was given to recognize publication outputs in high quality research journals by Sarawak TROPI researchers.

With no definitive means of eliminating of the Covid-19 pandemic yet in sight, 2021 will remain challenging in terms of organizing physical conferences and seminars. We will have to resort to using multi-media means to host such events. Though impractical for scientific presentations, this will have to be the new normal until such time a viable vaccine and vaccination programme is in place to restore free travel without SOP restrictions.

The Netherlands

Covid-19, like everywhere else, has put a stop to our activities. Prior to this, the Board was able to say goodbye to Piet Cleveringa as board member, on which occasion he was granted the honorary membership of the club.

On the same day, the Chairman of the citizens' committee of the Volgermeerpolder in Waterland also planned a joint meeting to examine the possibility of covering polluted polder with peat, based on many years of experience. However, this will have to wait until restrictions are lifted. The Congress in Tallinn was moved to May 2021.

In August, a delegation from the Board was introduced to the new President of IPS, Marko Pomerants, former Minister of Estonia. This was an introductory visit with the National Committees of the Netherlands and Germany. Our President, with an interest in both countries, organized the programme. However, the outbreak of the virus resulted in travel restrictions and Estonia declared a travel ban to the Netherlands.

Fortunately, Marko Pomerants was still able to fly to Bremen where he met with Guus van Berckel and in the evening, a meaningful exchange of views took place in Woerden, focusing on, among other things, the prospect of a peat academy. The next morning, Jan van den Akker met with Marko Pomerants in Zegveld for an explanation of the peat meadow problem. Immediately afterwards Marko travelled with Guus van Berckel to Germany.

In order to organize an event for members during this strange year, Board member Jos Schouwenaars organized a webinar, in which Arnout de Vries of the Frisian Environmental Federation gave a talk on the Currency for the Peat programme. This was held via MS Teams on 25th



Water management and land subsidence are important topics in the Netherlands.
Photo: Valentina Corsetti

November for a dozen members of the Dutch Peatland Society. He is affiliated to the Frisian Environmental Federation in which a programme is being initiated whereby landowners can sell their CO₂ savings on the market. The initial aim is to use the product in the peat meadow areas, in the low peatland areas in the middle of Friesland.

By raising the water table, emissions can be reduced. This, in turn, will cost crop yields. This can be compensated by selling the reduced emissions. Such a system is already used by multinationals worldwide, but in this case, the intention is to do so in a regional context. For example, the Frisian transport sector could buy CO₂ certificates from farmers. Such regional compensation does not yet exist, but buyers would like regional added value.

In the system are sellers, providers of CO₂ savings and buyers, such as companies, but also governments and individuals. A mediator, such as the Environmental Federation services both parties, and finally there is a supervisor who has to provide certification. For the peat pasture farmer, this may mean that he can (partly) maintain his grazing function, or he can contribute to nature development, or apply wet crops.

It is important to determine how many emissions will be reduced in order to be able to issue certificates on the basis of this. The mediator goes to the farmers to find suitable locations. Currently there are six locations and around 600 ha. This could result in 55,000 - 120,000 CO₂ certificates. They are estimated at €70 per certificate on purchase.

As a result of the presentation, a lively discussion took place between the participants regarding the various benefits and drawbacks of the system.

United Kingdom

- Producing UK Peatland News three times a year
- Keeping in touch with Allan Robertson's daughters
- Publication of UK Peatland News
- Contributing to AR Grants
- Covid-19 has prevented any other activities or interaction

Plans for next year:

- Video conference early in the new year
- Establish a Work Group to consider activities during UNFCCC COP 26 in Glasgow in November 2021.

Other National Committees

For possible late submissions, visit <https://peatlands.org/about-us/national-committees>.



Photo: Mitchell Trotter