

Nature Reserve “Rūjas paliene” Summary of the Nature Management Plan

Nature Reserve “Rūjas paliene”(territory code 5354) was founded 2004 on area of 444 ha according to the regulations issued by the Cabinet of Ministers Nr. 266. The main reason to found the Nature Reserve was to preserve the biotope 6450 (Northern Boreal alluvial meadows), mentioned in EC Biotope Directive Annex I and bird species like Great Snipe (*Gallinago media*) and Corncrake (*Crex crex*), mentioned in the Bird Directive Annex I. Nature Reserve includes the very last open meadows in the Rūja River floodplain meadows. This nature reserve is situated in the North Vidzeme Biosphere reserve. Main part of the territory is owned by the stakeholders.

This Nature Reserve is included into the Natura 2000 Site List matching both Biotopes Directive and Bird Directive. Borders of the Nature Reserve match with Important Bird Site “Rūjas paliene” (code LV037).

During the elaboration of the Nature Management Plan inventory of the biological values as well as researches of the hydrological regime and soil are done. Nature Reserve consists 9 biotopes mentioned in Biotope directive Annex I : 6450 Northern Boreal alluvial meadows (230 ha), as well as another biotopes of meadows, waters and forests increasing biological variety. In small areas also 4 biotopes priority protected in EU and 6 biotopes specially protected in Latvia are found. Nature Reserve is inhabited by 26 specially protected bird species, 20 of them are also mentioned in the Bird Directive Annex I as well as 8 specially protected invertebrate species, 4 specially protected species of vasculars, specially important is the deposit of the *Cnidium dubium* and one specie of specially protected mammal.

Highest importance of this Nature Reserve is preservation of the Great Snipe (*Gallinago media*, 20 –30 couples) and Corncrake (*Crex crex*, up to 10 couples). It is also important to preserve surrounding biotopes and plants as well as open landscape of the river.

Long-term task of the managing is: to keep the domination of the open floodplain meadows, to keep the specially protected species of plants and animals, to encourage the stakeholders to manage and maintain the meadows.

Short-term tasks include:

- 1) borders of the Nature Reserve are recognisable visually and territory mapping provides preservation of the natural values,
- 2) open floodplain meadows are occupying at least 277 ha and populations of the specially protected bird species are at least as instant value, population of the specially protected invertebrates is preserved,
- 3) restored at least 180 ha of former overgrown floodplain meadows,
- 4) reduced impact of the melioration ditches to the hydrologic regime of floodplain meadows,
- 5) collected information about the numeric changes of nesting birds after managing activities, regularly borrowed information about the preservation statement of the Biotope Directive Annex I biotopes, Annex II species and Bird Directive Annex I species.
- 6) stakeholders and society are informed about the natural values in the Nature Reserve and necessary managing steps to preserve them.

To provide restoration and maintenance of the floodplain meadows as prior steps are cutting off the bushes, primary mowing and regular mowing or pasturing. Important is also opening of the oaks and junipers and exclusion of some melioration

ditches from cadastre. Allowable is also single controlled burning down of the meadows. Nature management plan includes also steps to inform and educate the society. To diminish impact of the melioration ditches, it is suggested to fill up some of them or create a special dam.

Positive and especially important factor to preserve the natural values is the chance for stakeholders to apply and to receive the financial support from Farmers Support Service for managing of the biologically valuable meadows.

Preservation of the natural values in the Nature Reserve could be improved by restoring of natural flow of the River Rūja and closing electrical power plants Imanta and Ķoņi or increasing the water flow through them and installing special channels for fishes.

Territory of the Nature reserve does not need a zoning by function. The project of individual regulations of protection and managing includes chance to transform the land use to do the restoration of the biotopes and to create a tourism infrastructure, in coordination with North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve.

Nature Management Plan is elaborated in frameworks of project LIFE04NAT/LV/000198 "Restoration of the floodplain meadows for species and biotopes in EU" in cooperation with GEF/UNDP project "Protection of the biological diversity in North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve". Nature management plan is elaborated by Latvian Nature Fund, according to the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers Nr.234 „Regulations of the content and procedure of elaboration of nature management plan to the specially protected territories”.