



ALFAwetlands – Wetland restoration for the future

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Wetlands cover 5-8% of the Earth's land area. Apart from harbouring significant biodiversity, they also currently store around 225 billion metric tons of carbon. Their waterlogged nature creates ideal conditions for highly stable carbon volumes. Healthy wetland environments therefore have a major role in tackling the climate crisis. Their restoration would provide a nature-based solutions to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and thereby mitigating the severe effects of climate change.

However, wetlands also have the potential to be sources of carbon emissions, depending on their water level. Presently, there are large gaps in our knowledge regarding how and/or how much carbon is absorbed and released by wetlands, as well as socioeconomic effects of their restoration.

During four and a half years, Horizon Europe project ALFAwetlands strives to increase research on the potential of wetlands for climate change mitigation and further their restoration on an EU level.

ALFAwetlands aims to fill these gaps by:

- Improving the geospatial knowledge base of wetlands
- Evaluating pathways of wetland restorations that incorporate a co-creation process
- Providing information and indicators for sustainability to maximise climate change mitigation, biodiversity and other benefits.

To counter the existential threat of climate change, the EU aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030. This goal requires new carbon cutting measures across sectors. In terms of land management, wetlands as carbon rich environments can contribute to efficiently to both EU's climate targets and its biodiversity strategy by protecting biodiverse ecosystems.

Diverse project team to ensure better results

ALFAwetlands has assembled a team of experts from 14 organisations +1 affiliated entity across 10 EU countries to realise the project aims. Coordinated by Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke), the consortium includes an array of European environmental NGOs, research institutes and centres for higher learning.



“I am really excited to lead the ALFAwetlands project: we have such a great interdisciplinary consortium, including experts from different disciplines: from microbiologists and remote sensing specialists to soil scientists and socio-economists and modelers. I’m sure that with this talented and interdisciplinary team we will achieve the ambitious goals of the project and by implementing them, we will be a step closer to reach climate targets set by EU”, says **Dr. Liisa Ukonmaanaho**, project coordinator of ALFAwetlands from Natural Resources Institute Finland.

About the project

The ultimate goal of ALFAwetlands is to improve the geospatial knowledge base of wetlands, to evaluate the pathways of wetland restoration that incorporate a co-creation process, and to provide information and indicators for sustainability to maximise climate change mitigation, biodiversity and other benefits.

Project duration: 06/2022-11/2026

ALFAwetlands will examine the societal impacts, along with the economic costs, of different restoration methods at local, national and EU levels. On a local level, the project’s Living Labs will support and integrate research on ecological, environmental, economic and social issues.

ALFAwetlands is an opportunity for European researchers and decision-makers to unlock the full potential of wetlands as a climate change mitigation tool. By increasing the research capacities surrounding wetland restoration and carbon storage, the project will enhance the state-of-the-art for climate research on which EU climate policy and legislation is based. The project will also collect new experimental data on ecosystem responses to wetland management and restoration.

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