

# Why wetlands matter

## The linked climate, biodiversity and water crises

Interreg Europe webinar 'Climate adaptation in deltas II: Wetland restoration'

Dr Chris Baker, Director  
Wetlands International Europe

28 June, 2023



# Wetlands International Europe

**Our mission** to inspire and mobilise society to safeguard and restore wetlands for people and nature.

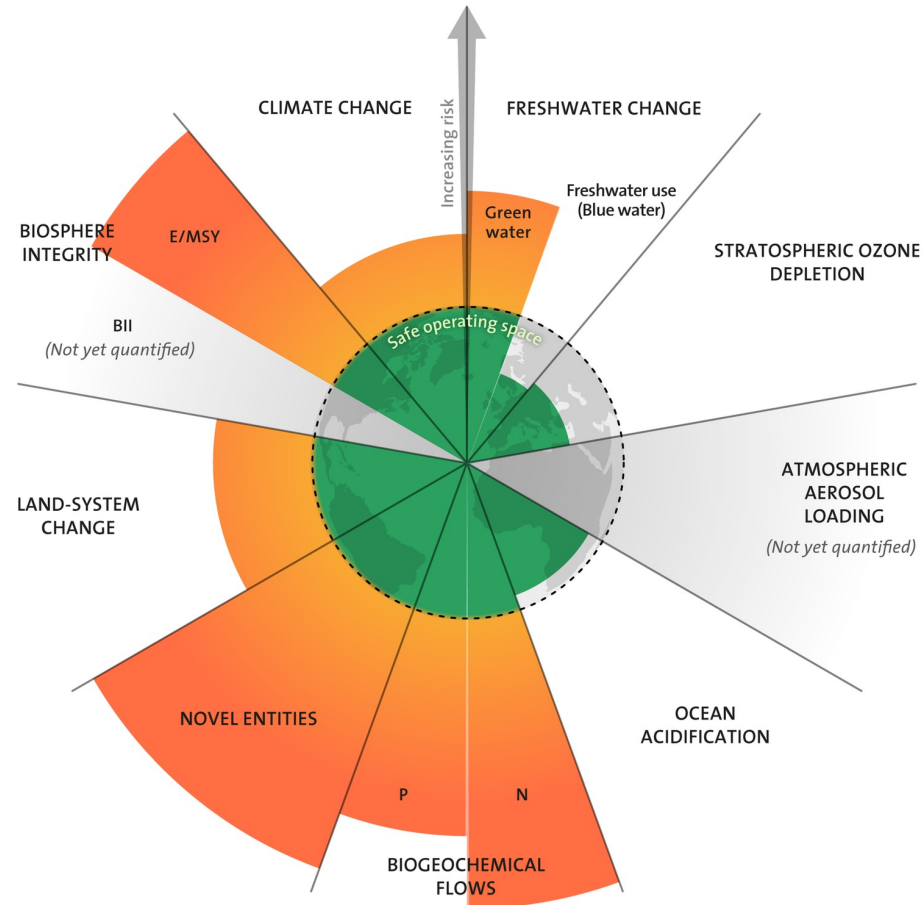
**Our ambition** for the period 2020-2030 is to upscale action to safeguard and restore wetlands, collaborating with multiple partners and mobilising a wide range of actors to transform whole landscapes and sectors.

**12 members representing 8 European countries**





# Climate crisis ...is a water crisis...is a biodiversity crisis



A Planetary Boundary for Green Water

# Climate-Water-Biodiversity crisis ...is a Wetlands crisis!

Lost Sponge Capacity & Natural Water Retention; Lost Biodiversity and Carbon Storage



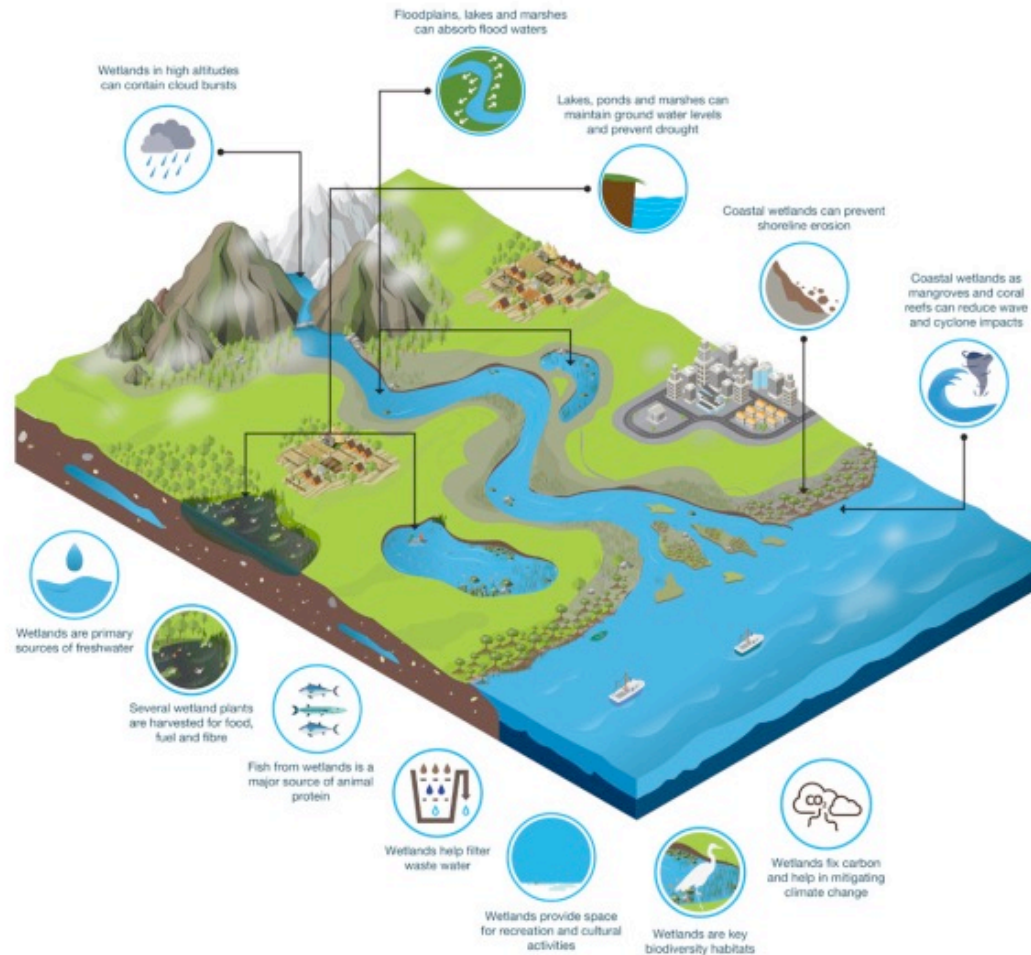
- **35% of Europe's wetlands lost since 1970**
- **70-90% of Europe's floodplain area is ecologically degraded**
- **wetlands, including mires, bogs and fens, are among the most threatened ecosystems in Europe**

[Global Wetland Outlook, 2018](#)



# Climate resilience

## Wetlands as large scale Nature Based Solutions



Prioritising landscape scale wetland restoration is investing in:

- Healthy ecosystems, improved water cycles, soil health
- Enhanced biodiversity
- Protection against natural disaster, exacerbated by climate change
- Climate mitigation and adaptation

**Effective + cost-effective**

# Bringing back our rivers and wetlands

## European Policy drivers

EU Policies	Contribution
<b>Birds &amp; Habitats Directives</b>	Improves the status of species and habitats
<b>European Green Deal</b>	Climate change adaptation and mitigation, restore ground and surface waters and biodiversity
<b>Biodiversity Strategy Nature Restoration Law Soil Health Law</b>	Protecting and restoring wetlands, grasslands and agricultural soils
<b>Water Framework Directive</b>	Improves freshwater ecosystems through natural flow regulation
<b>Floods Directive</b>	Reduce flood risk and reduce peak flows
<b>Farm to Fork Strategy Common Agricultural Policy</b>	Improve environmental and climate performance
<b>Trans-European Network for Green Infrastructure</b>	Maintain and enhance healthy ecosystems.
<b>Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change</b>	Essential nature-based solution sustaining healthy water and soils
<b>Drinking Water Directive</b>	Natural filtration of pollutants



# Restore Peatlands

- More than 50% of Europe's peatlands are degraded by drainage and use for agriculture, forestry and peat extraction
- Peatlands contribute 25% of the EU's agricultural CO2 emissions

## Priority actions

- Rewet drained soils; could capture up to 104 million tons C p.a.
- Switch production to paludiculture; cost effective, safeguards rural communities
- Conserve and manage pristine peatlands; only 10% currently protected



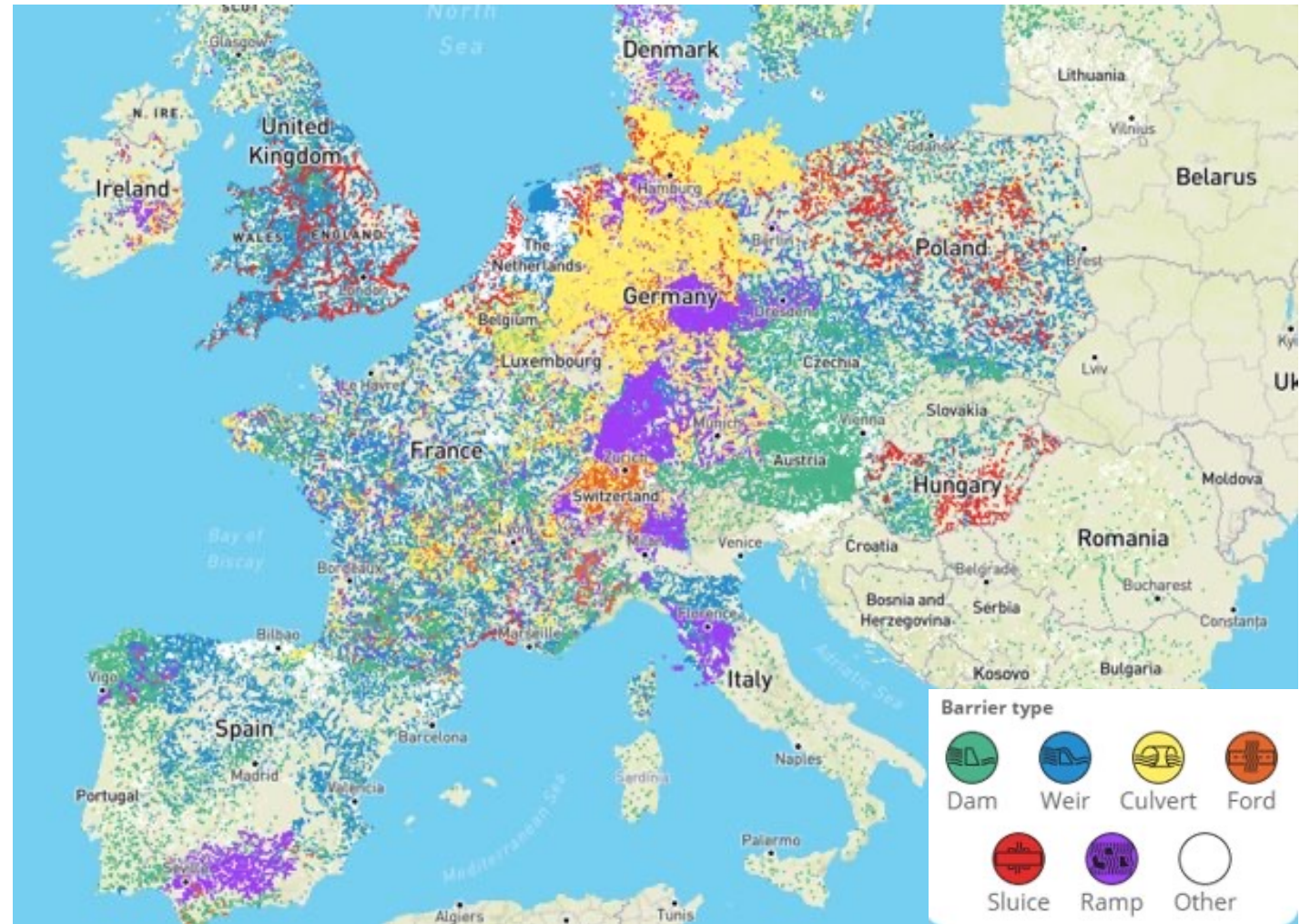


# Bring Back Free-Flowing, Connected Healthy Rivers

- 90% of floodplain wetlands are degraded;
- Rivers are 1 barrier every 1.5 km in the most densely populated countries
- By 2027 90% of river basins will still be unhealthy
- Migratory freshwater fish species declined 93% in Europe since 1970
- 39% of the freshwater fish species in the EU are threatened

## Priority actions:

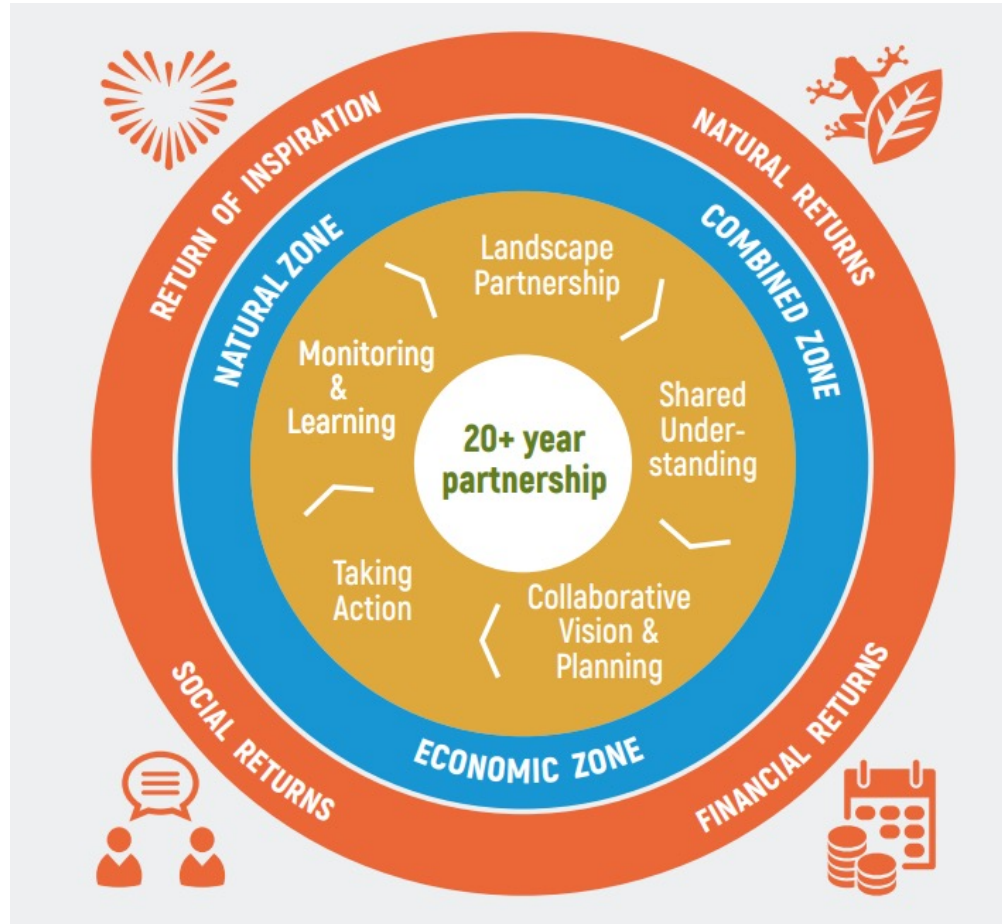
- Improve longitudinal connectivity:  
Remove (obsolete) barriers
- Lateral connectivity: Restore riverine landscapes (sponges)
- Prioritise biodiverse river reaches (swimways)





# Standard process for recovering landscapes?

## 4 Returns Framework



**Holistic, systems approach to enable resilient landscapes:** connecting natural, social and economic processes;

It allows government, business and communities to co-create and deliver a common vision for a resilient landscape

- (1) Inspiration
- (2) Social returns
- (3) Natural returns
- (4) Financial returns




[Four Returns Framework for Landscape Restoration](#)



 Wetlands International

 @WetlandsInt

 Wetlands International

THANK YOU!

For more information: [www.wetlands.org](http://www.wetlands.org)

