

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE DEFENCE INFRASTRUCTURE ORGANISATION AND POND CONSERVATION

Background

1. Protecting high wildlife value ponds is now a priority under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). Pond Conservation is the national charity dedicated to creating and protecting ponds and the wildlife they support. It carries out research, surveys and practical conservation, working in partnership with others.

2. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation, as a major landowner responsible for managing areas of high conservation value, is committed to delivering wider public benefits from its estate as well as the core military purpose. It recognises that well sited ponds can contribute to biodiversity enhancement and, where accessible, to public enjoyment of the countryside.

Aim

3. Pond Conservation and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) will seek to support the delivery of the UK Pond Habitat Action Plan by encouraging pond restoration and pond creation in places where this is compatible with the defence use of the estate and the interests of agricultural tenants.

Scope

4. This Agreement will operate mainly through promotion of the UK Pond Habitat Action Plan (HAP) as set out in Appendix 1 to this Agreement and the Million Ponds Project which seeks specifically to address Target 4 of the HAP. DIO will encourage the creation of new potentially high quality pond habitats where this is compatible with defence use. This work will be undertaken principally by MOD Conservation Groups in consultation with Pond Conservation so that ponds are likely to be appropriately located and well-designed.

Ways of working

5. As part of the Million Ponds Project, Pond Conservation will seek to:
- a. Provide DIO and the MOD Conservation Groups with technical advice and guidance materials on the creation of high quality ponds.
 - b. Provide training to DIO staff and Conservation Group members on the location, design and construction of high quality ponds.
 - c. Make site visits if appropriate to the larger pond creation schemes to provide on site advice.

6. As part of the Million Pond Project DIO will encourage:
 - a. The creation of new ponds across the defence estate through the activities of MOD Conservation Groups and as part of good estate management practice.
 - b. Surveys of existing ponds for their conservation interest.
 - c. The management of existing ponds to enhance the habitat for BAP priority species.

Targets 1, 2 and 3 of the Pond HAP

7. Pond Conservation will seek to provide DIO with support and advice in implementing the other three HAP targets, typically through projects that can be developed and funded by either party in parallel to the Million Ponds Project.
 - a. Pond HAP Target 1 – the development of a national inventory of priority ponds. MOD Conservation groups will be invited to undertake surveys of ponds (water bodies less than 2 ha in size).
 - b. Pond HAP Target 2 – flagship pond sites. DIO, MOD Conservation Groups and Pond Conservation will work together to identify a small number of flagship pond sites that can be the subject of longer term monitoring, protection and reporting programmes.
 - c. Pond HAP Target 3 – pond restoration. DIO and/or MOD Conservation Groups will endeavour to undertake suitable measures to restore ponds that are below priority status, with a particular focus on management for priority species. Guidance will be provided by Pond Conservation on appropriate training and methods of restoration.
8. Pond Conservation will endeavour to contribute to a wider understanding of pond habitats within MOD Conservation Groups by providing training in pond survey techniques and the identification of pond flora and fauna.

Health and safety

9. Pond Conservation is to ensure that an appropriate Risk Assessment is completed and submitted to the DIO site representative before undertaking any work in, around or near to water bodies. Individuals from Pond Conservation must agree to be escorted when undertaking survey and monitoring activities on the defence estate in compliance with security arrangements or lone working best practice. Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment is to be worn when working in and around water bodies.

Disclaimers

10. This Agreement does not confer any preferential status on Pond Conservation or imply that Pond Conservation any exclusive rights in relation to the provision of advice or other services to the Ministry of Defence. It does not imply any financial obligation unless this is specifically authorised by the relevant Directors of both partners.

11. DIO reserves the right to restore any land developed as part of this Agreement should there be an overriding need to use the land for defence purposes.

Communication

12. Both parties recognise that publicity arising from the Agreement will be handled jointly. Press releases may be produced by either party subject to prior approval. The DIO logo may be used in joint press releases. Pond Conservation is not permitted to use the MOD Tri-service logo in press releases or publicity.

Review of this agreement

13. It is recognised that the relationship between the parties will evolve over time and the Agreement should be reviewed periodically.

Signed
For DIO *[Signature]*
Dated *18 April 2011*
For Pond Conservation *[Signature]*
Dated *4 April 2011*

Targets of the UK Pond Habitat Action Plan

Target 1. Maintain the number of priority pond sites.

Notes for Target 1: The aim of this target is to maintain the *net* number of high quality pond sites. There will inevitably be some turn-over in high quality sites (i.e. some will be lost, and some gained). In addressing this, and other targets, particular emphasis should be placed on maintaining functional pond networks and species meta-populations.

Target 2. Maintain the quality of flagship pond sites.

Notes for Target 2: the aim is to work directly with a sub-set of c.1% of high quality ponds ("flagship ponds") to ensure they are monitored and their quality is maintained. This will ensure that critical sites do not degrade. It will also provide case-study information about (a) threats to high-quality sites, and (b) effective means of mitigation. The list of flagship ponds is currently under development.

Target 3. Restore pond sites priority status to deliver Species Action Plan targets.

Notes for Target 3: The aim is to restore ponds that are below high quality status for pond-associated SAP species, in order to help address the action plan for these species. The target can apply to any pond with a good potential for successful restoration for a SAP species, and can be aimed at improving water quality, or directly managing habitats. Invasive habitat management (e.g. plant clearance, dredging) should be undertaken only where there is little risk of damage to the existing biodiversity value of the pond site.

Target 4. Create new pond sites of high quality potential.

Notes for Target 4: The aim of this target is to create a new network of ponds with clean water and high biodiversity potential. The provisional definition of high quality potential ponds is "ponds located in areas where they drain a semi-natural surface-water catchment, and are unlikely to be significantly impacted by people in after-use (e.g. stocked with fish)". Target ponds should be located in a wide range of landscape types to maximise regional biodiversity. Their creation should not damage the value of existing sites or areas. Creation of (a) pond mosaics/complexes, (b) new ponds that increase landscape connectivity or form protective networks, and c) new sites that are targeted to support pond SAP species are particularly encouraged. Ponds cannot be counted against this target if they are created as mitigation for destruction of existing high quality ponds.

Definition of terms used

Pond site: Pond (or clusters of small ponds) plus the surrounding area that significantly influences the pond.

HAP pond sites: Ponds relevant to the HAP targets i.e. high quality pond sites, and other ponds that can be improved to maintain BAP species.

Flagship pond sites: A list of the best ponds which will be a particular focus of attention.