



Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve

World culture on wild banks



Welcome to a unique landscape

The transregional Flusslandschaft Elbe (Elbe River Landscape) Biosphere Reserve was recognised by UNESCO in 1997 and is the largest inland biosphere reserve in Germany, covering close to 282,250 ha.

It represents one of the last near-natural river landscapes in Central Europe.

Originating from the UNESCO biosphere reserve 'Steckby-Lödderitzer Forst', which was one of the first two German biosphere reserves, the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve now extends over a 400 km stretch of the Middle Elbe.

Numerous typical river and floodplain structures as well as corresponding near-natural habitats have been preserved, embedded in a centuries-old cultural landscape. This inclusion of a large floodplain ecosystem spanning five federal states in a biosphere reserve is unique in Germany.

**Natural diversity:
structurally rich
river banks**



**Elbe floodplain with
alluvial forest near
Dessau-Rosslau**



Key data on the development of the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve

A brief journey through turbulent times

24 November 1979

The nature reserve Steckby-Lödderitzer Forst with an area of 3,850 ha was recognised by UNESCO as a biosphere reserve on 24 November 1979 and officially established on 10 January 1980.

29 January 1988

Enlargement of the Biosphere Reserve 'Steckby-Lödderitzer Forest' by approximately 14,000 ha by including the Dessau-Wörlitz cultural landscape; renaming as the Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve.

16 March 1990

Resolution of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) Council of Ministers No. 18 / I 42 / 90 of 16 March 1990 for information on the status and planned development of biosphere reserves, national parks and nature conservation parks in the GDR ('National Park Programme'). The resolution also paves the way for the creation and development of a nature conservation park in the area between Boizenburg and Quitzöbel.

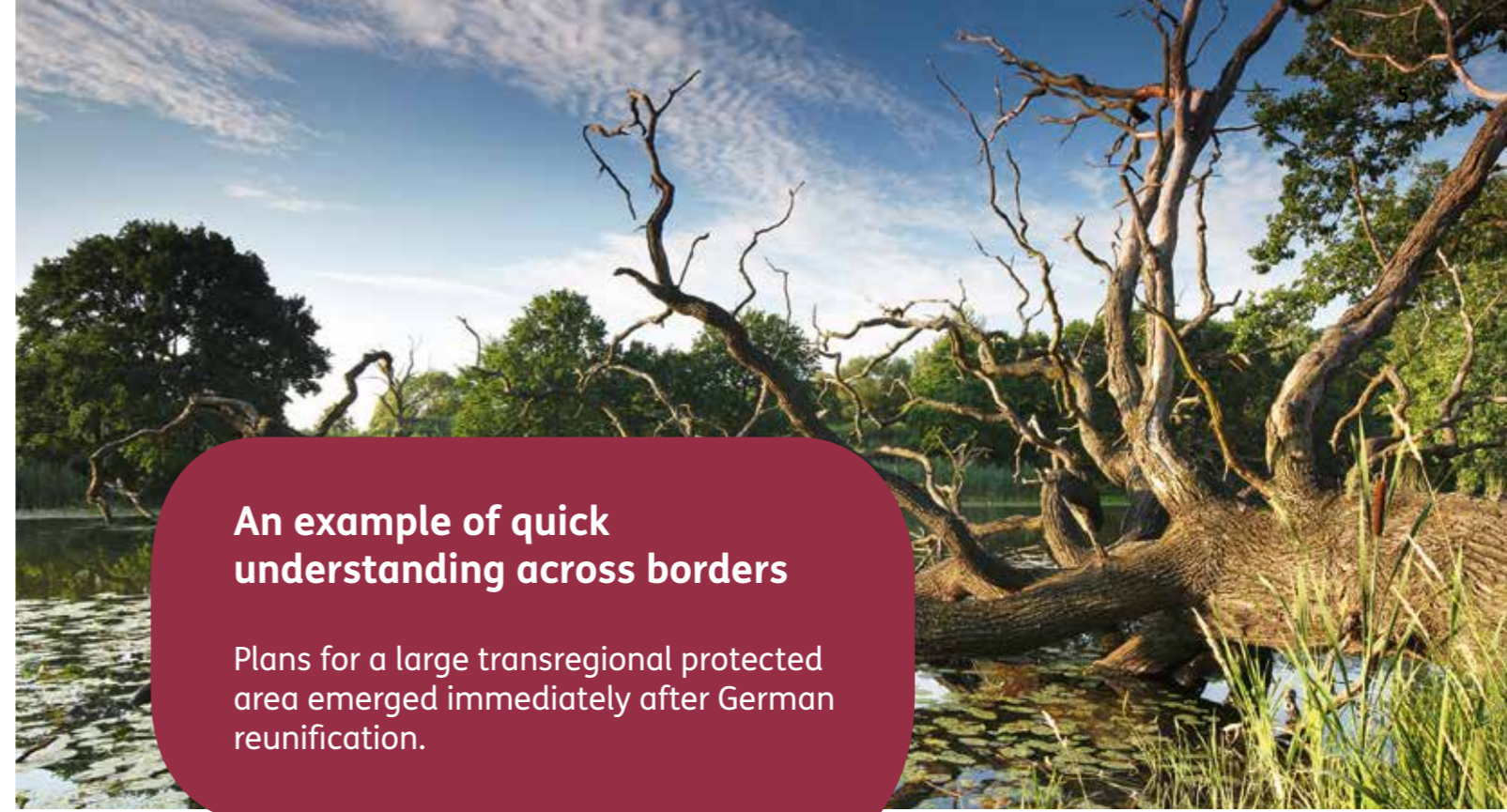
19 March 1990

At the ministerial conference of the Elbe riparian states on 19 March 1990, the designation of an Elbe valley floodplain national park between Lauenburg and Wittenberge is recommended on the initiative of Hamburg. The Ministry of Agriculture of Lower Saxony, as the highest nature conservation authority, is asked to initiate the necessary preparations together with the responsible departments of the GDR. On this basis, the Lüneburg district government then establishes contact with the Schwerin and the Magdeburg district councils in order to determine the possibilities for joint conservation efforts. In the process, initial concepts are also developed for the protection of areas.

15 May 1990

At the 19th session of the Schwerin district assembly, the designation of nature and landscape conservation areas as well as a stork sanctuary for the creation and development of the 'Schaalsee' and 'Mecklenburgisches Elbetal' nature conservation

Blue coloured male moor frog (*Rana arvalis*) during the mating season



An example of quick understanding across borders

Plans for a large transregional protected area emerged immediately after German reunification.

Kühnauer See near Dessau-Großkühnau

parks is decided (Resolution No. 89 of the Schwerin district assembly of 15 May 1990). Subsequently, the Schwerin District Assembly is dissolved by Resolutions Nos. 90 to 92.

12 September 1990

Enactment of the ordinance on the designation of nature and landscape conservation areas of central importance as the Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve (see GDR Law Gazette of 1 October 1990, special edition no. 1474). The Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve now covers 43,000 ha due to expansions.

10 December 1990

In Hanover, representatives of the federal states of Saxony-Anhalt, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Lower Saxony are in favour of drawing up a nature conservation framework concept for the Lower Middle Elbe Lowlands, which is to form the basis for protection, maintenance and development measures.

11 November 1991

8th Conference of Environment Ministers of the Elbe riparian states in Hanover. Reaffirmation of the goal of designating a large protected area in the Elbe valley floodplain. Decision to set up a cross-state working group to analyse the report commissioned at the beginning of 1991 on the protection and development of the Elbe valley between Quitzöbel and Sassendorf and to submit a proposal to the ministerial conference for the best possible protection of the Elbe floodplain.

15 August 1992

Completion of the 'Nature conservation framework concept for the Lower Middle Elbe Lowlands between Quitzöbel and Sassendorf' (known as the 'Dierking Report'), in which nature and landscape along the Middle Elbe are analysed for the first time across state borders and a concept for a large protected area between Quitzöbel and Sassendorf is developed.

1 March 1993

Conference of nature conservation ministers of the Elbe riparian states in Hitzacker (Lower Saxony), at which the essential course is set for a transregional UNESCO biosphere reserve. Mandate to the working group of the highest nature conservation authorities to submit an application for recognition as a biosphere reserve to UNESCO via the German Man and the Biosphere (MAB) National Committee by autumn 1993 at the latest. In this context, the conference is in favour of linking the previously planned large protected area between Quitzöbel and Sassendorf with the existing Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve.

14 October 1993

Saxony-Anhalt submits a jointly developed orientation application for recognition as a UNESCO biosphere reserve to the MAB National Committee.



In a quiet mood: Elbe near Damnitz

27 June 1994

Signing of the 'Dömitz Declaration' at Dömitz Fortress in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania by Environment Ministers Monika Griefahn (Lower Saxony), Matthias Platzeck (Brandenburg) and Frieder Jelen (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania). Reaffirmation of the will to jointly establish a large protected area in the Elbe floodplain. Mandate to the environment ministries to work out the development opportunities arising from a transregional protected area. Appeal to the Federal Minister of Transport not to press ahead with the expansion of the Elbe.

9 November 1994

Environment Minister Heidrun Heidecke (Saxony-Anhalt) endorses the 'Dömitz Declaration'.

8 and 9 December 1994

The German MAB National Committee notes with approval the preliminary application of the Elbe riparian states for the area from Quitzöbel to Sassendorf and suggests closing the gap between the planned large-

scale protected area in this area and the existing Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve in Saxony-Anhalt. This has provided a major impetus for a UNESCO biosphere reserve extending from Lauenburg to the Saxon border.

25 March 1995

Environment Minister Dr Edda Müller (Schleswig-Holstein) endorses the 'Dömitz Declaration'.

15 December 1997

Recognition of the Flusslandschaft Elbe as a UNESCO biosphere reserve as part of the MAB programme in accordance with the decision of the International Coordinating Council. The area extends over an approximately 400 km long section of the Lower Middle Elbe and covers a total area of 342,848 ha.

22 April 1998

At the 18th meeting of the 'Standing Working Group of Biosphere Reserves in Germany' (AGBR) in Brambach/Elbe near Zerbst, the federal states involved in the Flussland-

schaft Elbe were officially presented with the certificate of recognition as a UNESCO biosphere reserve on 15 December 1997.

November 2000

Recognition of the Garden Realm of Dessau-Wörlitz as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which is located in the Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve.

October 2001

Completion of the report on the review of the Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve ('Evaluation Report').

9 April 2002

Opening of a joint office for the transregional UNESCO biosphere reserve in Havelberg (Saxony-Anhalt). It is mainly financed by Brandenburg and Saxony-Anhalt. Note: The office no longer exists today. Since 2006, the chair and management have been carried out by one federal state at a time, alternating every two years.

December 2006

Finalisation of the framework concept for the transregional Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve by the participating states and ARCADIS Consult GmbH.

10 December 2007

Completion of the report on the review of the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve for the reporting period 1997 to 2007 ('First Evaluation Report').

2011

Certification of the first biosphere reserve partners (currently: 190 businesses, as of March 2024) based on the criteria catalogues developed since 2008, presentation of the transregional website: www.flusslandschaft-elbe.de

4 October 2012

Nature conservation conference in Tangermünde to mark the 15th anniversary of the transregional Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve.

January 2017

Adoption of the overall Elbe concept, a long-term plan for the protection, harmonised development and use of the Elbe. The importance of near-natural floodplains for nature conservation and flood protection is given appropriate consideration in this concept.

March 2017

Completion of the report for the second periodic review of the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve and submission to the office of the MAB National Committee in Bonn. By both expanding the area of the Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania part of the biosphere reserve and rounding off the areas of the biosphere reserve in Saxony-Anhalt, the total biosphere reserve area has been reduced from 342,848 ha to

282,250 ha.

The proportion of the core zone without utilisation could be increased to 2.5 %, but is still below the proportion of three percent of the total area envisaged for biosphere reserves.

14 September 2017

Boat excursion from Dömitz to Schnackenburg on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve.

June 2022

Successful completion of the evaluation process of the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve, which began in 2017, and presentation of the evaluation certificate to the State Secretary for the Environment Dr Steffen Eichner (Saxony-Anhalt) at the 'Haus der Flüsse' information centre in Havelberg.

30 September 2022

Ceremonial event to mark the 25th anniversary of the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve at Dömitz Fortress.

A framework agreement was also signed for further co-operation and the preservation of the UNESCO biosphere reserve.

June 2024

Conference of European and North American UNESCO biosphere reserves in Lutherstadt Wittenberg. The EuroMAB network is the largest and oldest regional network in the global network of UNESCO biosphere reserves. The network meets every two years and thus fulfils its role as a platform for the exchange of knowledge, practical know-how and experience for sustainable development. The conference is being held in Germany for the first time. Together with the German Commission for UNESCO as the main organiser, the Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve Administration based in Oranienbaum-Wörlitz is hosting the event.



UNESCO recertification of the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve

Facts and figures

The Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve is made up of the following sub-areas:

- Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve (Saxony-Anhalt)
- Flusslandschaft Elbe – Brandenburg Biosphere Reserve
- Lower Saxony Elbe Valley Biosphere Reserve
- Flusslandschaft Elbe – Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania Biosphere Reserve
- Flusslandschaft Elbe – Schleswig-Holstein Biosphere Reserve

Year of designation

1979

Year of expansion

1997

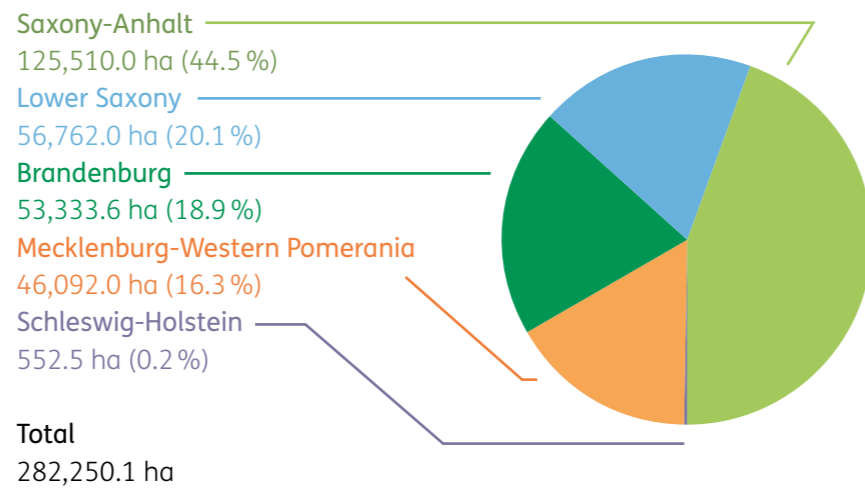
Years with periodic reviews and reports to UNESCO

2001, 2007 and 2017

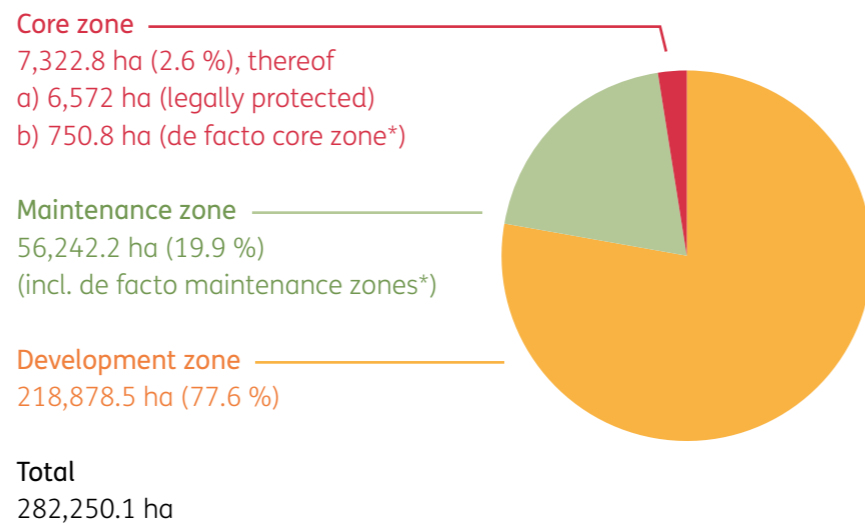
Population

approximately 232,000

Area shares of the federal states participating in the Biosphere Reserve (as of 1 January 2024)



Proportion of the zones in the Biosphere Reserve (as of November 2020)



* 'de facto' core and maintenance zones are not yet legally designated as such, but are secured in other ways (e.g. as publicly owned areas or areas of national natural heritage)

Information centres



Auenhaus Information Centre with Biberland (Oranienbaum-Wörlitz)



Haus der Flüsse – Natura 2000 Information Centre (Havelberg)



Rühstädt Visitor Centre



Lenzen Castle Visitor Centre



Gartow Information Centre



Information Centre at Dömitz Fortress



Dannenberg Information Centre



Archezentrum Amt Neuhaus, Hof Konau 11



Biosphaerium Elbtalaue (Bleckede)



Open-air exhibition EinFlussReich (Boizenburg)



Integrated Station Lauenburgische Landschaften (Mölln)

Joint tasks and cross-border projects



Cross-border co-operation

The founding of the state working group (Länderarbeitsgemeinschaft, LAG) for the biosphere reserve dates back to 1992, five years before the actual recognition of the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve. Under the biennial rotating chair of a federal state, the responsible ministries and administrative bodies are represented here in order to coordinate joint projects and strategically plan the development of the biosphere reserve at three to four meetings per year. The results of the co-operation include the joint partner network of the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve with the transregional website at www.flusslandschaft-elbe.de, coordination on the regular evaluations of the biosphere reserve and the framework concept as well as the organisation of joint information events and projects.



Nature conservation projects in practice and research

Federal funding is of particular importance for larger biotope and species conservation projects, such as the large-scale nature conservation projects 'Middle Elbe', 'Lower Havel', 'Middle Elbe - Black Elster' and 'Lenzener Elbtalau' for the relocation of the dyke near Lenzen in the Elbe river landscape. In addition, the following projects have been implemented in the federal 'Biodiversity' programme: 'Floodplain development and floodplain network on the Lower Middle Elbe' and 'Mechanisms of ecosystem services in hardwood riparian forests: Scientific analysis as well as optimisation through nature conservation management (Medi-AN)'. Finally, as part of the EU's Natura 2000 funding, the 'Floodplain amphibians' project, co-financed by EU LIFE funds, can be carried out for the conservation and development of fire-bellied toad populations.



Management of Natura 2000 sites

The Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve represents a near-natural river plain with outstanding biological diversity. Large parts are therefore part of the European protected area system 'Natura 2000'. These include areas notified under the Habitats Directive totalling 101,290.8 ha (= 35.9 % of the biosphere reserve) and areas classified under the European Birds Directive with 170,095 ha (= 60.3 % of the biosphere reserve). In these protected areas, the aim is to secure or establish favourable conservation conditions for valuable animal and plant species and habitat types. An important instrument for this is the implementation of site-specific management plans.



Participation in the overall Elbe concept and co-operation in flood protection

In the implementation of the overall Elbe concept of the federal government and the federal states, the Flusslandschaft Elbe working group represents the area of nature conservation across the federal states. In the federal states, the individual biosphere reserve administrations work closely with the departments responsible for flood protection, in the coordination and implementation of many small measures in 'day-to-day business' as well as in planning projects to implement the objectives of the National Flood Protection Programme. Numerous hydraulic engineering projects are currently being implemented as part of the overall Elbe concept and the riverbed stabilisation programme for the Elbe.



Implementation of EU funding programmes

The 'European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development' (EAFRD) and the 'European Regional Development Fund' (ERDF) provide important financial resources for co-financing projects in biosphere reserves. In some cases, the administrative offices are the funding authorities, in other cases the administrative offices of the biosphere reserve advise potential applicants on the use of these funds; however, they can also utilise the funding themselves. In recent years, a number of projects have been implemented to promote nature conservation objectives in agriculture (e.g. for conservation and quality assurance in grassland or for meadow bird projects) or for regional development (e.g. construction of the Haus der Flüsse information centre in Havelberg, construction of observation towers, promotion of biosphere reserve partners).



Tourism and regional development

The administrative bodies of the biosphere reserve are committed to sustainable regional development in accordance with UNESCO requirements and legal stipulations. Participation in the local action groups of the EU LEADER regions is of particular importance. One focus is the development of tourism infrastructure. Through co-operation with tourism organisations and the Luther | Bauhaus | Gartenreich | Elbe marketing association, the use of funding programmes to design tourist attractions and the implementation of visitor guidance concepts, the biosphere reserve aims to become a sustainable tourism destination. The former inner-German border, the Green Belt, is another tourist attraction. The participation of the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve in Deutsche Bahn's 'Destination Nature' programme is aimed in particular at sustainable local mobility.





Education and communication

In accordance with the UNESCO criteria, education for sustainable development and communication are among the central tasks in the biosphere reserve. The Flusslandschaft Elbe is home to numerous information and educational facilities, some of which are publicly funded, which can be visited along the Elbe and offer coordinated exhibitions and educational activities on various topics. Numerous junior ranger projects, biosphere schools and biosphere kindergartens, project days at schools of different levels, discovery booklets for children and the joint website are just some of the cross-border education and communication projects. Using the example of the former inner-German border in the biosphere reserve, the Green Belt, historical and ecological themes can be combined in interdisciplinary educational projects.



Partners of the biosphere reserve

Many companies and businesses in the biosphere reserve follow the concept of sustainable management: respectful of people and nature, energy and resource-conserving and integrated into regional economic cycles in many ways. Under the umbrella of the nationwide 'Partners of the National Natural Landscapes' programme, they can become 'Partners of the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve'. The 190 transregional partners include hotels, guesthouses and restaurants, educational institutions, craft businesses and traders, agricultural businesses and food processing companies. The partners see themselves as sustainable ambassadors of the Biosphere Reserve and revitalise regional development. There is also the local brand „Regionalmarke MittelElbe“, which the Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve in the south of Saxony-Anhalt co-operates with.

PARTNER

Biosphärenreservat Flusslandschaft Elbe



The Arche Region (Ark Region) of the Flusslandschaft Elbe

The 'Arche-Region Flusslandschaft Elbe' was the first of its kind in Germany to be recognised by the Society for the Preservation of Old and Endangered Domestic Animal Breeds (GEH) in 2011. With a focus on the Mecklenburg and Lower Saxony part of the Biosphere Reserve, more than half of the domestic and farm animal breeds on the Red List are kept here thanks to the considerable efforts of over 150 private individuals and businesses. From pigs to cattle, horses and donkeys, sheep and goats to poultry, rabbits and dogs, all types of livestock are represented here. This not only contributes to the preservation of this remarkable genetic diversity, but can also have positive effects on the regional economy and tourism.



Participation in the world network of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves

748 UNESCO biosphere reserves in 134 countries (as of March 2024) form a global network of these internationally recognised areas. By exchanging ideas with other biosphere reserves (including Indawgyi Lake, Kafa) on issues of regional development, education, research and monitoring, the administrative offices of the Flusslandschaft Elbe contribute to the development of the global network. Personal participation in the European and global congresses of the MAB programme, for example in Lima in 2016 and in Lutherstadt Wittenberg in 2024, facilitates involvement in the future strategic direction of the network.



UNESCO World Heritage Sites

With the 'Bauhaus and its sites in Weimar and Dessau', the 'Garden Realm of Dessau-Wörlitz' and the 'Luther Memorials in Eisleben and Wittenberg', there are three UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Saxony-Anhalt part of the Biosphere Reserve that point to the outstanding cultural and historical significance of this region. The special relationship between UNESCO World Heritage and the MAB Programme is particularly evident in this context. In the north-west of the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve, in the Hamburg metropolitan region, there are also plans to establish closer co-operation links with the World Heritage sites there.



Periodic review of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

Every ten years, as required by the UNESCO MAB Programme, biosphere reserves are reviewed to determine whether they meet the agreed development goals. The defining criteria for our country have been laid down by the German MAB National Committee, 'Criteria for the Recognition and Review of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in Germany'. The biosphere reserve was evaluated for the first time in 2001. Further successful reviews of the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve in its current form followed in 2007 and 2017.



Characteristic animal species of the biosphere reserve



Sand lizard
(*Lacerta agilis*)



European fire-bellied toad
(*Bombina bombina*)



Weatherfish
(*Misgurnus fossilis*)



Tadpole shrimp
(*Lepidurus apus*)



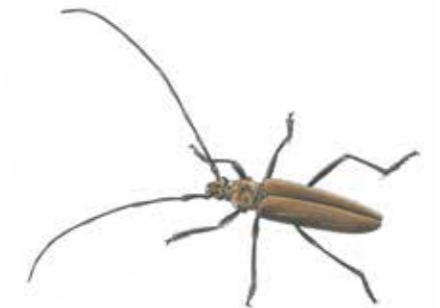
White stork
(*Ciconia ciconia*)



Eurasian otter
(*Lutra lutra*)



Green hawker
(*Aeshna viridis*)



Great capricorn beetle
(*Cerambyx cerdo*)



Northern lapwing
(*Vanellus vanellus*)



White-tailed eagle
(*Haliaeetus albicilla*)



Elbe beaver
(*Castor fiber albus*)



Greater white-fronted goose
(*Anser albifrons*)



Black tern
(*Chlidonias niger*)



Atlantic salmon
(*Salmo salar*)

From idea to realisation

Successful projects from the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve

The realisation of specific projects from various subject areas is an important part of what we do. The wide range of topics from nature conservation, planning and management, regional development and education reflects the many facets of our work.

Large-scale nature conservation project: Middle Elbe – Black Elster

Project area
Wittenberg district

Duration
2020 – 2034/35

The issue
The riverbed of the Middle Elbe has been steadily eroded here for over 100 years. Measures to make

the river navigable intensified the deep erosion: the course of the river was straightened and the riverbed eroded ever faster due to the increased flow velocity. As a result, the surrounding floodplain landscape is flooded less and less frequently and is drying out. This change in the ecosystem threatens numerous floodplain inhabitants.

The solution

In order to renaturalise the Middle Elbe and the adjacent floodplain areas, measures are being sought to stabilise the water balance of the floodplain in the long term and improve connectivity with the Elbe and the Black Elster. A central approach is the planned reconnection of old watercourses to the main river. The typical floodplain habitats are also to be preserved and improved

through the desilting of old watercourses and the creation of new small bodies of water.

Partners

Heinz Sielmann Foundation; „chance.nature - federal funding for nature conservation“ programme, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (represented by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation); Ministry of Science, Energy, Climate Protection and Environment of Saxony-Anhalt; Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve Administration Saxony-Anhalt

Alte Elbe Bösewig



Lödderitzer Forst – riverside forest and view on Steckby

Large-scale nature conservation project: Middle Elbe

Project area
Steckby-Lödderitzer Forst, Area between the Mulde and Saale estuaries

Duration
2001 – 2019

The issue

Close to 80 % of all floodplains along the Elbe were interrupted or destroyed by the construction of dykes. As the Elbe was no longer able to spread out naturally during floods, valuable habitats were lost. The narrow confines of the river also increased the risk of uncontrolled flooding.

The Solution

In order to create a continuous floodplain, a new 7.3 km long dyke was built between the mouths of the Saale and Mulde rivers. The old dyke was made permeable. This has created a floodplain landscape that is three times the size of the previous floodplain. This measure is currently the largest dyke relocation in Germany.

Partners

WWF (Germany) - project office Middle Elbe, Dessau; State Office for Flood Protection and Water Management Saxony-Anhalt; „chance.nature - federal funding for nature conservation“ programme, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (represented by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation); Ministry of Agriculture and Environment of Saxony-Anhalt; Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve Administration Saxony-Anhalt



Elbe River floodplain at Vockerode

LIFE+ The Elbe River floodplains at Vockerode

Project area

Elbe River floodplains at Vockerode

Duration

2010 – 2018

The issue

The project aims to create conditions that will enhance and ensure the long-term preservation of the river landscape in the Middle Elbe region.

The solution

Flood protection and nature conservation go hand in hand: the main measure of the project was the opening of the Gatzer Bergdeich dyke to create a 210-hectare floodplain. At the same time, the extensive floodplain landscape and the ecological condition of the watercourses were safeguarded. This resulted in an upgrading of the precautionary ecological flood protection. Flooding can no longer cause damage in this area.

Partners

WWF (Germany); LIFE+ project office „Elbauen bei Vockerode“, Dessau; Saxony-Anhalt State Administration Office; Kulturstiftung Dessau-Wörlitz; Landgesellschaft Sachsen-Anhalt mbH; District of Wittenberg; Municipality of Vockerode; Agrargenossenschaft Wörlitz eG; City of Dessau-Roßlau; Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve Administration Saxony-Anhalt



Grazing by Heck cattle („aurochs“)

Oranienbaumer Heide

Project area

Central Oranienbaumer Heide

Duration

2007 – 2011

The issue

The Oranienbaumer Heide (Heath) was used for military purposes until 1992. The consequences were areas contaminated with munitions, oil and fuel as well as scrap metal. Any further utilisation of the area was ruled out.

The solution

Despite major contaminated sites, diverse habitats have developed in which endangered animal and plant communities find a refuge. In order to promote their development and security, a year-round pasture was established. Heck cattle and Konik horses now ensure that invasive species do not spread and increase the structural diversity of the herb layer. Signposted paths have been accessible again since the munitions were cleared in 2012.

Partners

Anhalt University of Applied Sciences (FH) - Department of Agriculture, Ecotrophology and Landscape Development; NABU Regional Association Köthen; Nature Foundation David; Primigenius - Köthener Naturschutz und Landschaftspflege gGmbH; Förder- und Landschaftspflegeverein „Mittelelbe“ e.V.; Federal Forest Service „Mittelelbe“; Institute for Federal Real Estate (BImA); Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve Administration Saxony-Anhalt



A nature and landscape guide presents the content she has developed to her colleagues.

Training for nature and landscape guides

Project area
Elbe-Havel region (Flusslandschaft Elbe – Brandenburg and Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserves, Westhavelland Nature Park)

Duration
Since 2015

The issue
There was a lack of qualified staff in the Elbe-Havel region to support visitors in experiencing the unique natural and cultural landscape, which limited its tourism potential.

The solution
The training project for nature and landscape guides, certified according to national standards, imparts comprehensive knowledge about the cultural landscape. Participants learn how to organise expert, committed and versatile guided tours in the protected areas. The training programme covers technical basics, didactics and practical issues. After completing the course, participants undertake work shadowing in order to apply and develop what they have learnt in practice.

Partners
Flusslandschaft Elbe – Brandenburg and Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserves, Westhavelland Nature Park, nationwide working group of environmental education centres in nature and environmental protection (BANU)



The training group of nature and landscape guides at a seminar



Ring-banding of young storks in Rühstätt with the participation of the biosphere reserve administration

Active in the European Stork Villages Network

Project area
Municipality of Rühstätt and 14 European villages

Duration
Since 1996

The issue
Changes in land use in Europe, particularly intensive agriculture, are reducing the number of meadows and pastures. As a result, the food base for white storks (*Ciconia ciconia*), consisting of plants, insects, frogs and other small animals, is in sharp decline. In addition, a study by the Flusslandschaft Elbe – Brandenburg Biosphere Reserve shows the negative effects of climate change on the stork population.

The solution
The EuroNatur Foundation initiated the ‘European Stork Villages’ to counteract the loss of stork habitat in Europe. The storks’ habitat is improved through international exchange, landscape projects such as wetland restoration, monitoring and eyrie care. Designation as a Stork Village raises awareness of stork protection and involves residents and tourists. Rühstätt in the Brandenburg part of the biosphere reserve is part of the association.

Partners
Flusslandschaft Elbe – Brandenburg Biosphere Reserve, EuroNatur, Rangerservice Brandenburg, Rühstätt Stork Club e.V., NABU Brandenburg State Association



Young storks are ring-banded directly in the nests using a lifting platform. The nests are renovated in winter.



A calling fire-bellied toad

EU-LIFE project 'Floodplain amphibians - 301 ponds in Lower Saxony' - sub-project for the conservation of the fire-bellied toad

Sub-project area

Lower Saxony Elbe Valley
Biosphere Reserve

Duration

2016 - 2024

The issue

The decline in amphibians is serious in Central and Northern Europe. This also affects the fire-bellied toad (*Bombina orientalis*). In the Lower Saxony Elbe Valley Biosphere Reserve, this species is at the north-western edge of its Eurasian range and is threatened with extinction. More than 98 % of the population in Lower Saxony lives in the biosphere reserve. However, as in the parts of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Brandenburg, the population here has also declined sharply in

recent years. The aim of the project entitled '301 ponds in Lower Saxony' is to improve and develop the habitats not only for the fire-bellied toad but also for the rare tree frog (*Hyla arborea*) and the crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) in eleven project areas in central and eastern Lower Saxony.

The solution

Based on a management plan, numerous measures were implemented to improve the habitat of the fire-bellied toad, such as the creation and restoration of 130 small bodies of water, the construction of 14 km of fencing and the extensive grazing of around 90 ha of land in Lower Saxony. The project was also extended to areas in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Brandenburg. The genetics of the fire-bellied toad populations in Lower Saxony were also analysed as a basis for population management measures. Against this background, around

20,000 fire-bellied toads were bred for reintroduction into restored habitats. The project was accompanied by extensive educational and public relations measures.

Partners

Lower Saxony Elbe Valley Biosphere Reserve, Flusslandschaft Elbe - Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania Biosphere Reserves, NABU Landesverband Niedersachsen (Lead Partner), Amphi International



Species-rich riparian grassland

Co-operative floodplain management in the Lower Saxony Elbe Valley Biosphere Reserve

Project area

Lower Saxony Elbe Valley
Biosphere Reserve

Duration

2016 - 2024

The issue

Due to the extreme flood events of the past twenty years, the shape and structure of the Elbe valley floodplain and its significance for flood runoff have become the subject of regional public debate. On the basis of two-dimensional runoff modelling, bottlenecks and other obstacles that could impede flood runoff in the floodplain were identified, in particular wooded areas. In order to improve flood runoff at these bottlenecks, some woody plants were cut back for the first time in 2014/15 and then left to

their own devices. Over the course of a few years, however, dense bushes developed with a potentially higher flood resistance than before their removal.

The solution

To solve the problem, co-operation bodies ('floodplain management associations') were established in the four sub-regions of the biosphere reserve, which network the institutions involved in the maintenance, management and development of the Elbe floodplains. They are made up of representatives from flood protection and nature conservation, agriculture and regional development. In particular, these associations also looked for approaches to dealing with the willow stands that had developed as a result of the pruning in 2014/15. The focus was on how these areas could be kept free of woody plants in the future. To this end, they were either mechanically maintained over several

years or grazed with various animal species (cattle, sheep, goats, horses). In comparison to machine maintenance, grazing proved to be particularly environmentally friendly. The results of the project are an important contribution to the medium-term development of near-natural floodplain management, which combines forward-looking flood protection with the sustainable protection and utilisation of valuable grassland and alluvial forest areas.

Partners

Lower Saxony Elbe Valley Biosphere Reserve, Lower Saxony Chamber of Agriculture - Uelzen district office, North-East Lower Saxony Farmers' Association.





The Elbe valley dunes near Klein Schmölen: landscape conservation of the rough grassland through sheep grazing

Conservation measures on inland dunes

Project area
Klein Schmölen and Gothmann inland dunes

Duration
2021 – 2025

The issue
The Flusslandschaft Elbe – Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania Biosphere Reserve is home to inland dune sites of supra-regional importance in the Klein Schmölen and Gothmann areas. Open inland dunes and the flora and fauna typical of these sites are highly endangered throughout Europe. In particular, the abandonment of traditional forms of utilisation and increasing nutrient input from the atmosphere are leading

to a change in the composition of the vegetation and to a decline in species that are typical of the site and rare in particular.

The solution
Measures to preserve the open inland dunes, which are highly endangered throughout Europe, include woodland management and ploughing off the grassy topsoil on selected sites. Other measures include the suppression of invasive species such as cactus moss (*Campylopus introflexus*) and the implementation of grazing concepts to keep the inland dunes open.

Partners
Flusslandschaft Elbe – Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania Biosphere Reserve, Forestry authority, land-owners and Förderverein Biosphäre Elbe M-V e.V.



The Elbe dunes near Klein Schmölen: one of the largest inland dunes in the UNESCO Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve



Partner municipality in the biosphere reserve: the fortress town of Dömitz on the Elbe

Biosphere municipalities in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania

Project area
Flusslandschaft Elbe – Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania Biosphere Reserve and awarding region

Duration
Since 2019

The issue
One of the special roles and responsibilities of the municipalities in the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve is in implementing sustainable development in accordance with the Lima Action Plan. However, local authorities often lack the human and financial resources to develop and implement sustainable development goals and measures. There is also a desire for closer co-operation with the biosphere reserve

administration in municipalities outside the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

The solution
An agreement on closer co-operation has been concluded with nine municipalities in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania within the Flusslandschaft Elbe Biosphere Reserve. The co-operation includes the designation of these municipalities as ‘Biosphere municipalities’, with which an intensive, regular exchange of information on specific goals has been agreed. The municipalities are supported by the biosphere reserve office in the development of a future-orientated development strategy.

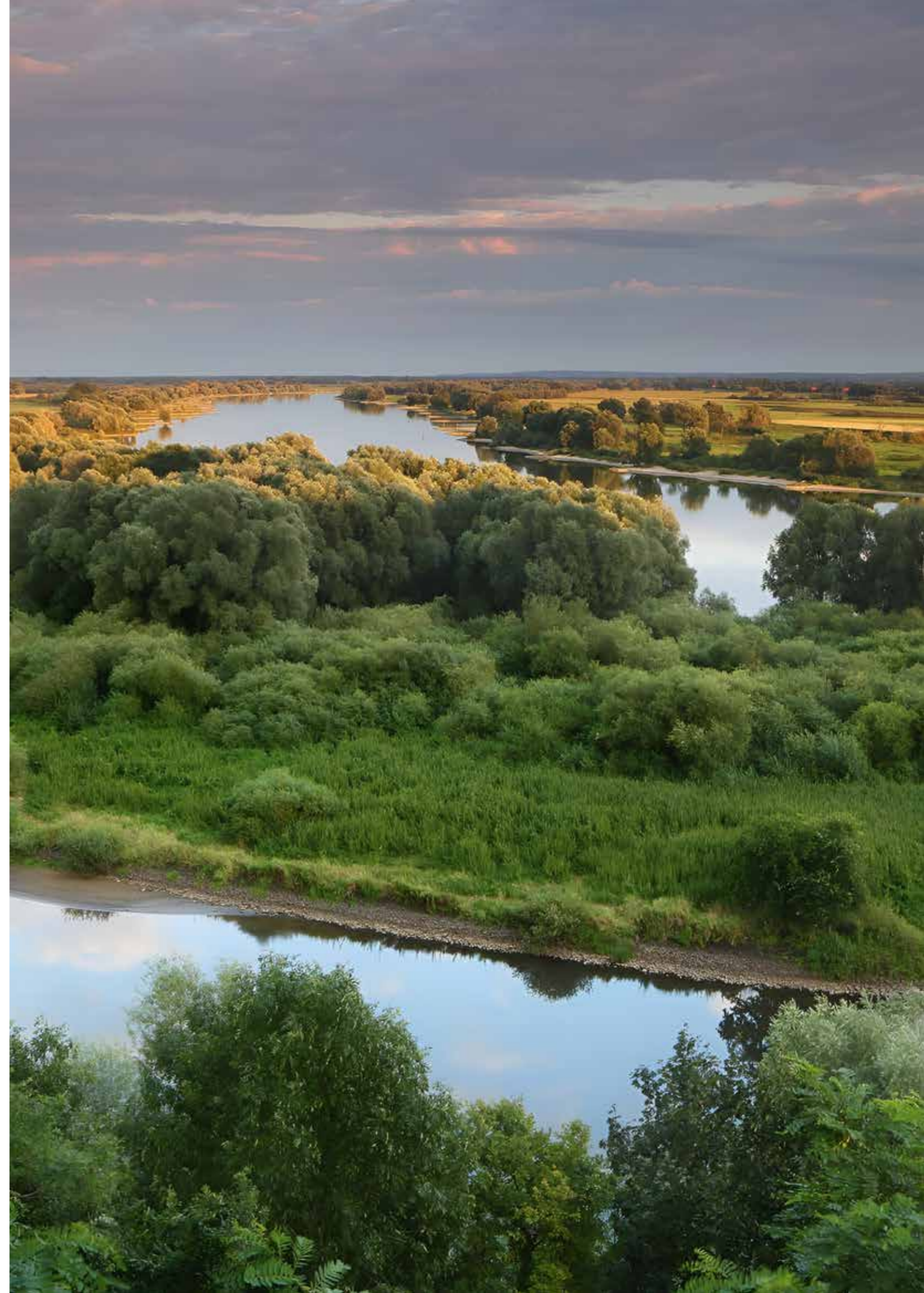
Partners
Flusslandschaft Elbe – Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania Biosphere Reserve, municipalities in the awarding region, Förderverein Biosphäre Elbe M-V e.V.



Ceremonial honouring of the first two biosphere communities with a certificate and plaque: Bresegard near Picher and Redefin

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