

## **Baupte (Manche, France) or the come-back of water: where, when, how? An exception submitted to conflicts between stakeholders.**

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Most of the peat exploitations in France are in the image of its mires, i.e. small-sized. With its 650 ha, the Baupte mire is an exception. Located in Lower-Normandy, in the Manche department, in the heart of the Cotentin isthmus swamps, whose 25,000 ha wetlands area form a Natural Regional Park.

The exploitation time, due to the peat thickness (up to 12m), is the second exception in France. Firstly traditional and strongly regulated before WWII, exploitation turned into an industrial way and endured until us despite operator changes.

Peat uses evolved from briquettes used as domestic fuel to boiler feeding in the hydrocolloid plant, then since 1980 it has been exploited for an horticultural purpose.

The operating mode and plan were chosen at the beginning (1946) and respected until 1997. The technique consisted of a superficial scraping of the peat dried thanks to drainages ditches whose water was gathered in a main drain, pumped and discharged in a nearby river.

The exploitation extension (by underwater technic) has just been agreed. The rehabilitation issue concerns both the former and current areas. It appears as being crucial because of topographical, hydrogeological and economic conditions.

The residual peat hanging wall is in -7m NGF after exploitation. Pumping stop would lead to a total flooding of the former exploitation area, and a partial flooding around the quarry.

It means an alteration of the whole Gorges swamps, as a break with uses followed before and during exploitation. So appear the issues of level and speed of flooding, depending on technical possibilities and economic datas, the latter acting upon political wills.

We will set out the difficulties in 3 steps :

1 – examination of the convergences and divergences between the different actors : the industrialist, the Cotentin Swamps Natural Regional Park, the municipalities, the Regional Direction of Environment, the environmental protection associations, but also hunters and fishers. Right now, according to the ornithological monitoring carried out on the 450 ha water body which took place on the former exploitation area, the operation is mainly to migratory birds' advantage.

2 – presentation, according to the IMCG perspective, of hydrogeological, pedological and hydrological datas with underlining of the essential elements as well as the totally doubtful ones. For example, as the argillaceous level has been demonstrated as semipermeable and discontinuous, we still don't know the infiltration capacity from the basin to the underlying water bearing sands.

3 – study of different scenarii in the light of impact reports and scientific expertises carried out, especially within the context of the "Recreate Nature" programm, which summed up the ecological and edaphic conditions in many ponds after extraction (Clément et al., 2000).

To conclude, the author will give her personal point of view by widening the thought to the geographic framework of Sèves watershed.