



**Submission for the First Western Europe and Other States (WEOG)
Regional Consultation on Nature-Based Solutions
Children and Youth Major Group
July 2023**

Children and Youth Major Group submission to the intergovernmental consultation following up on the UNEA Resolution 5/5 (UNEP/EA.5/Res.5) on Nature-based Solutions in reply to the co-chairs' invitation *to provide input in relation to the overall aim of the intergovernmental consultations and the three specific tasks for the consultations specified in the resolution.* CYMG presents its contributions to the following points:

1. The overall aim of the intergovernmental consultations
2. Examples of best practices

The overall aim of the intergovernmental consultations

Children and Youth Major Group is pleased to take part in the consultations happening for this region, as a way to share the vision of the global youth on what we can do to contribute to the implementation of nature-based solutions in solving/mitigating the effects of the climate change in the natural world and human societies. We share the vision that young people should also be considered when thinking about nature-based solutions since we can contribute to the discussion around the topic by sharing our novel ideas and the projects that young people have done.

We at CYMG believe that nature-based solutions can be a great tool in achieving some of the Sustainable Development Goals, but that would only work if there is cooperation (whether multilateral or bilateral) between Member States and other Stakeholders. We also stand for our common philosophy that nature-based solutions should be implemented taking into account the welfare of the communities most affected by the triple planetary crisis, in order to best benefit them.

This is a compilation list of projects that utilize nature-based solutions as way to combat the consequences of the climate crisis, and for this submission, we compiled two examples from the Western Europe and Other States (WEOG) region. For each one, we have written a summary of their goals and development process as well as their outcomes and sources of finance.



Examples of best practices

North America

Canada

The Cheakamus Community Forest is a collaboration by the Lil'wat and Squamish First Nations and the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) to protect and sustainably manage over 33,000 hectares of forest.

Nature-based Intervention:

- In 2009 the forest allotment surrounding the Whistler ski resort became available when the Canadian Ministry of Forests and Range announced a new Community Forest program. When this opportunity arose the RMOW created a partnership with the Lil'wat and Squamish first nations communities where all three are equal partners. Together they created the Cheakamus Community Forest which encompasses 33,000 hectares in total with approximately 15,000 hectares being designated as an area where no commercial harvest is allowed. Sustainable forestry is part of the mandate for the land allotment, so the first nation's forestry partners use an Ecosystem-Based Management approach to harvest approximately 40 hectares per year.

Overview of context and outcomes:

- Whistler is the most visited tourist destination in British Columbia and has a high profile as a major outdoor recreation destination. This area of land surrounding the Whistler resort was previously logged much more heavily and without indigenous community involvement. The commercial timber companies harvested 200 hectares annually with little available input from local people.

Climate change mitigation:

- The project reportedly sequesters 15,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year. Since the development of the project, it has reportedly sequestered over 150,000 tons of carbon.

Ecosystem health:

- There was a reported increase in habitat quality and connectivity due to a decrease in logging pressures and the designation of non-harvest zones within the community forest area.



Socioeconomic outcomes:

- This intervention helped return control of the land back to the Lil'wat and Squamish First Nation when it had previously been controlled by commercial interests.

Finance:

- The project reportedly earns \$100,000 from carbon credit sales annually. They also receive funding from their forestry partnerships and timber harvest.

Western Europe

United Kingdom

The Medmerry project for intertidal habitat restoration with managed coastal realignment on the West Sussex coast has regenerated 184 hectares of intertidal habitat, restoring wildlife functioning and protecting communities from flooding and coastal erosion.

Nature-based Intervention:

- Managed realignment is the practice of building a structural sea defense inland from the coast and allowing the exposure of an intertidal area between the defense and the ocean. The Medmerry project constructed seven kilometers of flood bank inland, creating 184 hectares of salt marsh and mudflat habitat and 263 hectares of other priority habitats. The flood bank itself was built using several hundreds of thousands of cubic meters of clay extracted from the site which also led to the formation of freshwater ponds and reedbeds that have attracted wildlife back to the area. In partnership with local farmers, the saltmarsh is grazed by sheep and cattle at low density and cereals and special wild bird seed mixes are grown on land surrounding the habitat to attract and benefit wildlife. A system of collective ditch management has also created adjacent freshwater habitats for water voles, amphibians, and dragonflies, likely countering the area's recent biodiversity losses. The project has also provided a water treatment facility and a road serving 5,000 residents.

Overview of context and outcomes:

- Many parts of England's coastlines are facing a loss of intertidal habitats to sea level rise and coastal erosion. Intertidal habitats such as salt marshes, mudflats, sand dunes, and shingles provide important coastal protection from strong waves, high tides, erosion, and storm surges. They also serve as habitats for important wildlife species like wetlands and shorebirds. Thus, built on years of research, the Medmerry project is practicing managed realignment to help restore the lost and weakened intertidal habitat that is crucial to the well-being of both humans and wildlife. Medmerry is one of the largest managed realignment projects on the open coast of Europe and serves an older, lower-income population that frequently faces pressures from coastal inundation. Today, the project is



taught in the school curriculum nationwide and has received over 16 major national and international awards.

Climate change mitigation:

- Although mitigation impacts of the Medmerry project have not been reported, it is likely that the created intertidal habitat will increase the carbon sequestration and storage potential of the area. Studies of similar systems within the United Kingdom have shown that coastal habitats play a key role in carbon sequestration and storage.

Adaptation:

- The intertidal habitat is predicted to provide protection from coastal pressures such as erosion, sea level rise, and storm surges. Thus far, the project has been estimated to provide flood protection to 348 properties, many of which belong to older and low-income people. The annual risk of flooding was reportedly reduced from 100% to 0.1% and is predicted to save an estimated 78 million GBP over the coming 100 years.

Ecosystem health:

- Intertidal habitat restoration combined with additional efforts to attract wildlife, including agricultural practices that protect nature such as low-density grazing, have led to an observed increase in the size and number of bird populations in the area, as reported by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). This has created key positive increases in the ecosystem health metrics of habitat quality and species diversity. Due to these efforts shoveler, shelduck, teal, avocet, lapwing, and oystercatcher populations were observed to have significantly grown in size by 2019.

Socioeconomic outcomes:

- The estimated benefits to local communities are now estimated at a value of up to 90 million GBP. A large proportion of the economic gain is the improved level of flood defense as compared to the shingle bank that formerly served as coastal protection and was associated with a 300,000 GBP annual maintenance cost and breached almost annually. The Medmerry project also provides an accessible recreation site with a large network of footpaths, cycle paths, and car parks providing well-being benefits to the local community as well as attracting green tourism.

Finance:

- The main sources of finance in this scheme mirror the governance structures with the UK Environment Agency and the RSPB being central to the financing of the project. The environment agency is supported by the government of the UK through the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs which supports the medmerry project. Early strategic land purchases which made the project possible were financed by the Sussex Ornithological Society and the Peacock Trust.