OUTLINE PROJECT PROPOSAL: "EU WATER WATCH"

Aim of the project:

- Centred on trans-national co-operation in the protection of freshwater resources across the EU. Aimed at preserving and enhancing biodiversity and water quality
- Participation of schools in the management of freshwater habitats across 10 EU Partner Countries, through a programme of outdoor environmental educational activities.
- Involve students recording environmental and scientific observations uploading onto a database interacting with EU Partners through dedicated Website.

Expected product:

A web based database of water quality and biodiversity across Europe acquired by school children.

Project duration:

36 months

Potential partners:

Lead Partner: Ballybay Wetlands, Northern-Ireland? (see annex 1 for background information)
Partner 1: OPW, Ireland
Partner 2: Vara Municipality, Estonia
Partner 3: GAVRN, Spain
Partner 4: DLG, The Netherlands
Partner 5: Wetlands International, Netherlands
Partner 6: Waterschap Roer en Overmaas, Netherlands
Partner 7: Provence of Flemish-Brabant, Belgium
Partner 8: Provence Vlaams-Brabant, Belgium
Partner 9: Carpathian Euroregion International Secretariat, Hungary
Partner 10: Harghita County Council, Romania
Partner 11: North Transdanubian Environmental and Water Directorate, Hungary
Partner 12: Centre for Sustainable Management of Resources, Netherlands
Partner 13: Anamaria Batari, Municipality of Budapest, Hungary
Partner 14 : Agencie Catalan de l'Aigua, Catalunya, Spain
Partner 15 : Loughs Agency? Northern Ireland/Scotland/UK

Funding:

INTERREG IVc theme: Environmental Education and awareness raising
Application: Autumn 2007/Spring2008
Decision: Approximately Spring/Summer 2008

Total EU budget INTERREG IV € 860 Billion:

44% Competition & Cohesion
40% Natural Resources, Farming, Fishing, Landscape & Rural Development

I - PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Under the INTERREG IIIA programme for Ireland/Northern Ireland a pilot project to monitor water quality in cross-border catchments was undertaken. Software for pda technology was developed to monitor riparian habitats and stream characteristics, weather and student observations and this data was uploaded onto a GIS-linked website database. This project was highly successful and was published as an example of 'best practice' in the INTERREG IIIc funded Flood Awareness and Prevention Policy in border areas network.

Following this exposure a number of European partners requested participation in the project. Subsequent research has identified that the most efficient way to raise awareness amongst young people of their environment is to bring them into their local environment and teach them to identify and record the species. If this information sourced by children from across Europe is entered on a central database then it can be of use to research institutions, statutory organisations as well as schools as an education resource.

A GIS-linked website database used by pilot regions across Europe provides great potential for integration of information across Europe amongst its young people. It will provide direct comparative results and will raise awareness according to the requirements of the Water Framework Directive. It will provide links between young people, universities and local authorities.

In order to have a rigorously accurate database it will be necessary to train teachers/educators in the pilot regions in the scientific protocols of making the record. So to facilitate this accreditation will be sought for the required training.

II - OBJECTIVE OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The objective of the Ballybay Wetlands in setting up an INTERREG IVC project is to raise awareness of water quality, biodiversity and natural resource management amongst young people across Europe and to empower young people to develop a database to record water quality and important species in their local areas.
The project will work with identified partners to set up pilot regions during the development phase but it is planned to include an administration page on the website to enable more organisations to contribute to the database in the future (subsequent to their satisfactory completion of the training).

III - ROLE OF THE BALLYBAY WETLANDS

The initial 'good practice' project Vital Signs programme manager will be the programme co-ordinator for the new project based at Ballybay Wetlands. Ballybay Wetlands is an ideal host for the project as it is a purposely built Outdoor Education Centre that provides a safe environment for young people to participate in Environmental Studies programmes. The Ballybay Wetlands team provide the know-how in project management (including financial administration) and the project co-ordinator has the skills in developing education programmes for field education.

IV – ACTIVITIES

Over the 36 months of the project period a firm network of co-operation will be established between the partner institutions. The network will be set up and strengthened by meetings, training sessions and internet-based exchanges, seminars, internships and study visits.
Specific field of activity will be:

- Establishment of the partnership
- Establishment of the Steering Committee (with representation from each partner)
- Creation of the data requirements document (database spreadsheet) in Latin and each partner country language
- Development of the website GIS-linked database
- Preparations for implementation in each pilot region
- Development of education support materials in different languages
- Training of educators in the accredited training programme
- Piloting the website and database in the different countries
- 3 seminars per year in different countries
- Exchange of expert information between pilot regions
- Study visits and internships
- Launch of the website and database
- Dissemination of database throughout partner countries
- Planning for the sustainable maintenance of the website and database

V - OUTCOMES AND PROJECTS

Apart for the partnership itself, outcomes will include

- Website with education materials in different languages
- GIS-linked website database of key environmental information
- Accredited training programme for educators
- Communication network for young people across Europe
- Communication network for Environmental Educators across Europe
- Useful scientific database for researchers and statutory bodies and educators
- Greater environmental appreciation amongst young people

VI - FINANCIAL ASPECTS

The development of the website and GIS-linked database will be the biggest expense (approximately € 100,000 but possibly up to€ 150,000).

The requirement for training programme to ensure educators will make an accurate record for the database will be an extra cost, considering there are likely to be 15 partners, a minimum of 15 people will have to be trained. (it is envisaged that they in turn will be able to train other educators? Not sure how the certification might work then) € 150,000

Project Management team
Salaries: project co-ordinator, financial administration and PR/dissemination officer. € 150,000 per year for 3 years € 450,000

Meetings and Seminars
€ 1000 per trip per partner and 3 trips per year 45x3 years € 135,000

Capital Costs
Computers, Education materials, € 45,000

Running Costs
Rent, Phones, Electricity, Travel for 3 years € 120,000

Estimated Total: € 1,050,000

Match funding contribution at 25% € 252,050
50% €525,000

Partner contribution € 12,500
Lead partner € 64,550

ANNEX 1
INFORMATION ABOUT THE LEAD PARTNER

Ballybay Wetlands Centre

Location:
Derryvalley Farm located at a strategic bend in the Dromore River System. Co. Monaghan

The focus of the **Ballybay Wetlands Project** is Derryvalley Farm which is scenically located at the mouth of the Dromore River system. The 65 acre holding is situated at a strategic bend in the Dromore River approximately one kilometre downstream from Ballybay town, Co Monaghan. Derryvalley farm and surrounding areas abound in wildlife, birdlife and wetland species. It is regionally important as a site of wintering migratory birdlife. Ballybay Wetlands Centre is positioned to act as a beacon for Eco-Tourism and Environmental Education in the North West region and in so doing, assist in spreading the benefits of tourism beyond the east coast of Ireland

Visitor Experience

The lake-shore location of the centre provides a unique opportunity to provide blue-ribbon facilities in both angling and passive recreation pursuits, and to encourage wildlife observation. As a year-round refuge for a wide spectrum of waterfowl the Centre offers an unparalleled venue for the study and appreciation of a unique wildlife experience, allowing visitors to collect first-hand information and obtain vivid experiences through their own investigations. The centre will attract a broad tourist stream, including eco-tourists, artists, academics, photographers and other interest groups.

Environmental appreciation and learning:

- **Discovering Nature……Learn to Activities**: 2 and 3 day holiday packages encompassing a range of activities such as Boating/Canoeing, Fly Fishing for Pike, Coarse Fishing, Wild Life Photography, Painting Spring Flowers/Watercolours, Sketching, Family Wildlife Safaris, Hedgerow Management for Wildlife, Walking, Cycling, Orienteering, Birds for Beginners, Migratory Flocks.

- **Walk on Water**: A floating pontoon walkway providing access across a designated water route, and allowing a unique experience of a pristine natural habitat.

- **Conference Tourism**: Particular opportunities have been identified for Public sector conferences/seminars and public service away days. Hosting of such conferences/seminars at the Ballybay Wetlands Centre will provide a unique setting and an example of environmental sustainability in practice.
- **Educational Tourism:** Learning activities based on observing creatures in their natural habitat will include Mini-Beast Safaris, Pond-dipping, Fishing, Wild-life Sketching, Fresh Water Sampling, Soil Sampling, Learn about lichens. Ballybay Wetland Centre will also offer a programme of field-study days that will enthuse and enlighten teachers. The Centre will also provide a Centre for universities and third level colleges have their field-trips.
- **Environmental Conservation Tourism:** Ecological role of Wetlands in flood control, natural systems that provide benefits to people and to nature. Environmental conservation activities which will be offered will include hedge laying, treeplanting and wetland management to REPS planners, farmers, and contract workers to local authorities.
- **Competition Angling:** We propose to increase the number of competitions and attract the additional activity into the Ballybay Wetlands Centre.
- **Special Event Days:** the Centre will host a range of special event days for the visitor market such as Bird Feeding, Artist in residence, Autumn Leaves-Painting workshops: Know your Water Colours.
- **Casual Visitor:** The Centre will be marketed to the day visitor market as an eco-tourism centre and will provide an added facet to the County's tourism product base, encouraging visitors to stay longer in the area. Day tickets will be available to visiting birdwatchers and to visiting coarse and pike anglers.

ANNEX 2
LOCAL & REGIONAL PARTNERS FOR PILOT REGION IN NORTHERN-IRELAND

1.Monaghan County Council:
Environment Section:
Water Quality Monitoring in line with Water Framework Directive
Phosphorous regulations on point source discharge, pre-dating nutrient management
MCC working in partnership with Farmers and the IFA

MCC Environmental heritage:
Botanical Environmental Survey of Wetland Habitats currently near completion to be presented to the public in October 2007 from the **Ballybay Wetlands Centre**

2.Fisheries: Northern Regional Fisheries:
Educational Programme 'Something Fishy'
Angling Council of Ireland: Coarse Angling
Loughs Agency

3.Teagasc REPS and Forestry Environmental Protection

4.Forestry Coillte

5.FAS Environmental Training

6.Wildlife Officer

7.Dundalk Institute of Technology: DKIT
Centre for Natural Freshwater Studies
Study Focus: Milltown Lake and its catchment Oram - Churchill
Public Consultation : 34 kilometre square region
Visited every house in the catchment asking and looking at what kind of sewage treatment systems were in use.
Examined for Total Phosphorous, Bacteria, Faecal Coliform
Conclusion:
Need remediation measures in place
Solutions have to be easy to implement
Community based projects
Action: The study group set up Mini- Science Schools in the region

8. Blackwater Trace Project: EU Interreg 3 (a)
Transboundary River Basin : Local Authorities: Monaghan County Council
Dungannon District Council
Armagh District Council
Queens University
Delineated a region of radius 5K ,Aim : To make a steep change in:

Phosphorous levels in catchments, Phosphorous levels in streams,Diffused Phosphorous coming from fields

Farmer involvement in Nutrient Management & Waste Regime.

Achieved huge reduction in quantities of fertiliser being used.

Soil Testing Results: Dramatic reduction in all Phosphorous levels, particularly significant because this is not an intensive farming area.

Septic Tank & Percolation Area Survey Results indicated 90% of systems were defective

Ballybay Wetland Centre: Accredited Environmental Training:

'Train the Trainers'

Accredited Training : November 2007 – July 2008

15 Trainees

Programme of Modular Training:	**Agency/ Educational Institution**
Ecology: relationships between living organisms	DKIT
Species identification and classification	VITAL SIGNS
Latin Nomenclature	Queens University
Species specific relationships	FAS
Field- skills	
Field Safety	
Using Equipment	
Measurement & Quantification	
Environmental Education Programme	
Examination of water status	
Baseline biotic indexing identification of species	
Invertebrates, grasses, sedges, reeds,	
Wildfowl Migratory species	
Fish life…frogs..mayflies.. lifecycles	
Hedgerow trees	
Hedgerow birds	
Seeds, fruits, beries …	
River/ Riparian Habitats	
~River flow, temperature, pH	
~River Mapping	
Ramsar Sites	
~Bio-diversity of Wetlands	
Lakeside & Wetland ecology	
Water Framework Directive	
Flood Directive	
Habitats Directive	
Soils	**Teagasc**

~Soil Types Soil Sampling
Measuring soil phosphorous
Diffused phosphorous from fields

Mapping **Office of Public Works**
Reading Ordnance Survey Maps
Making Maps

Water Quality Monitoring **MCC**
Nutrient Management
Training in Septic Tank Monitoring

Wildlife Gardening **Western Organic Network**
Design your own garden: Sensory Delights
Connect with Nature: Grow your food
All about Herbs: Medicinal & Healing

Organic Horticulture
Pest, Disease & Weed Control in Organic Horticulture
Integrating Forestry with Organic Farms
Marketing Skills for Organic Producers
Farmers Markets
Introduction to Bee Keeping
Cheesemaking
Introduction to Alternative Energy