

# IPS and SER resolution to Poland

## RE: Rospuda Valley Mire and the proposed Via Baltica expressway

Thirty-one international peatland scientists visited the Rospuda Valley Mire within the context of a field study in August 2006, jointly organized by Society for Ecological Restoration International (SERI) and the International Peat Society (IPS). SERI is a non-profit organization associating approximately 2300 members – individuals and organizations, engaged in ecologically-sensitive repair of ecosystems. IPS is a non-profit organization with approximately 1400 members, dedicated to fostering the advancement, exchange and communication of scientific, technical and social knowledge and understanding for the wise use of peatlands and peat. Collectively, we have a comprehensive understanding of mires in Europe and the world.

It is our unanimous opinion that the Rospuda Valley Mire is one of the most pristine mires in Europe. However, this unique reference system is under immediate threat by the proposed construction of the Via Baltica expressway. Based on our experience, the Rospuda Valley Mire is a unique and pristine ecosystem for the following reasons:

1. It is an undisturbed, complete fen valley system which cannot be found elsewhere in Europe, having naturally evolved following the last glaciation.
2. The Rospuda Valley Mire is a self-sustaining ecosystem that will survive for generations without any management, whereas restoring and maintaining similar, degraded fen sites is extremely expensive and often impossible.
3. This system contains plant and animal species which are endangered at the European and global levels.
4. This is the last reference system\* for the restoration of this fen type in Europe.

Fens are among the most sensitive ecosystems, susceptible to degradation through any interference of their local and regional hydrological regime. There has already been large-scale and severe degradation of fen systems within Poland and throughout Europe. Given the fragile hydrological equilibrium, the road development would create irreversible damage to the fens of the Rospuda Valley. While mitigation measures may be effective in reducing the impact, they would not ensure preservation of the key functional aspects of this system.

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International Peat Society



Dr Markku Mäkelä  
President



Jaakko Silpola  
Secretary General

\* For definition see SER web site: ([https://www.ser.org/content/ecological\\_restoration\\_primer.asp#6](https://www.ser.org/content/ecological_restoration_primer.asp#6))