

PROTECTION OF WETLANDS AS AN ELEMENT OF WATER MANAGEMENT IN RURAL AREAS

Mioduszewski W., Hardej M.

Natural retention capacities of the river catchments have diminished markedly due to decreasing area of forests, disappearance of small water bodies and wetlands, covering the ground surface with impermeable materials (roads, squares) and due to draining systems. These reasons are assumed to increase the rate of water cycling and transport of chemical substances in catchments and thus to increase the frequency of extreme phenomena like floods and droughts.

It is necessary to improve the structure of water balance by enlargement of potential retention capacities of small river catchments. Basic target in this aspect is the protection and reconstruction of wetlands or, in other words, of water-related ecosystems.

This paper presents basic actions associated with the protection and restitution of wetlands undertaken in recent years. Legal, organisational and financial conditions determining the maintenance of wetlands in a good ecological status are described.

Most often the aim of these actions is to protect wildlife in wetlands. Nevertheless, they play a positive role for the structure of water balance. The importance of wetlands as water suppliers is commonly acknowledged though there are difficulties in the quantitative evaluation of the effect of wetlands on surface and ground water resources.

National parks and the legal system of nature protection play a positive role in wetland protection. It is, however, necessary to undertake broad action to disseminate the idea of the protection and restoration of wetlands with particular reference to legal and economic instruments as stimulators for the creation and restitution small wetlands in agricultural landscape.

The creation of a small number of large wetlands will not exert a significant impact on water budget in the country. Many such areas, providing appropriate water management, would improve water quality and enlarge water resources available to agriculture and other users.