

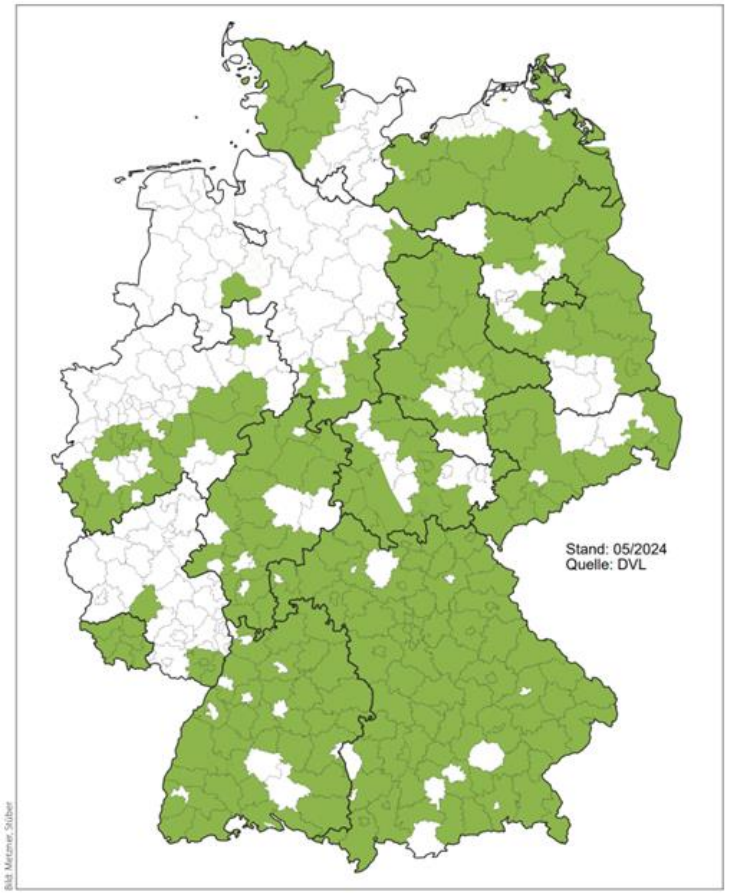
Climate adaptive farming by reviving traditional water meadows

Landcare Conference - Working with Farmers and Nature:
Water-Smart Agroecology and Landcare in Action, 21.09.2026

Thomas Köhler, DVL

Deutscher Verband für Landschaftspflege

Deutscher Verband für Landschaftspflege (DVL) e.V. Landcare Germany



- Umbrella organisation of 200 regional Landcare Associations
- Founded 1993 by Landcare Associations
- Collaboration with >15.000 farmers (conventional & organic) and 4,000 municipalities & regions
- Equality of agriculture, nature conservation and municipalities is written in the Articles of Association
- Founding member of the organisation 'Landcare Europe'

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Project: Climate adaptive water management

- Spread knowledge and experiences about different water retention methods
- Help initiate new projects
- Make suggestions for adaptations of laws and regulations

gefördert durch
DBU
Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt
www.dbu.de

STIFTUNG NATUR UND UMWELT RHEINLAND-PFALZ

Gefördert durch die GlücksSpirale

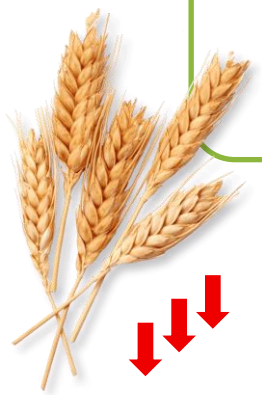
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What are traditional water meadows?

Original purpose and functionality

Water meadows „back in the day“



- No mineral fertilizer
- Dry periods
- Limited amount of fodder

Traditional irrigation

More cattle

- More water and minerals on grasslands
- Higher grassland productivity

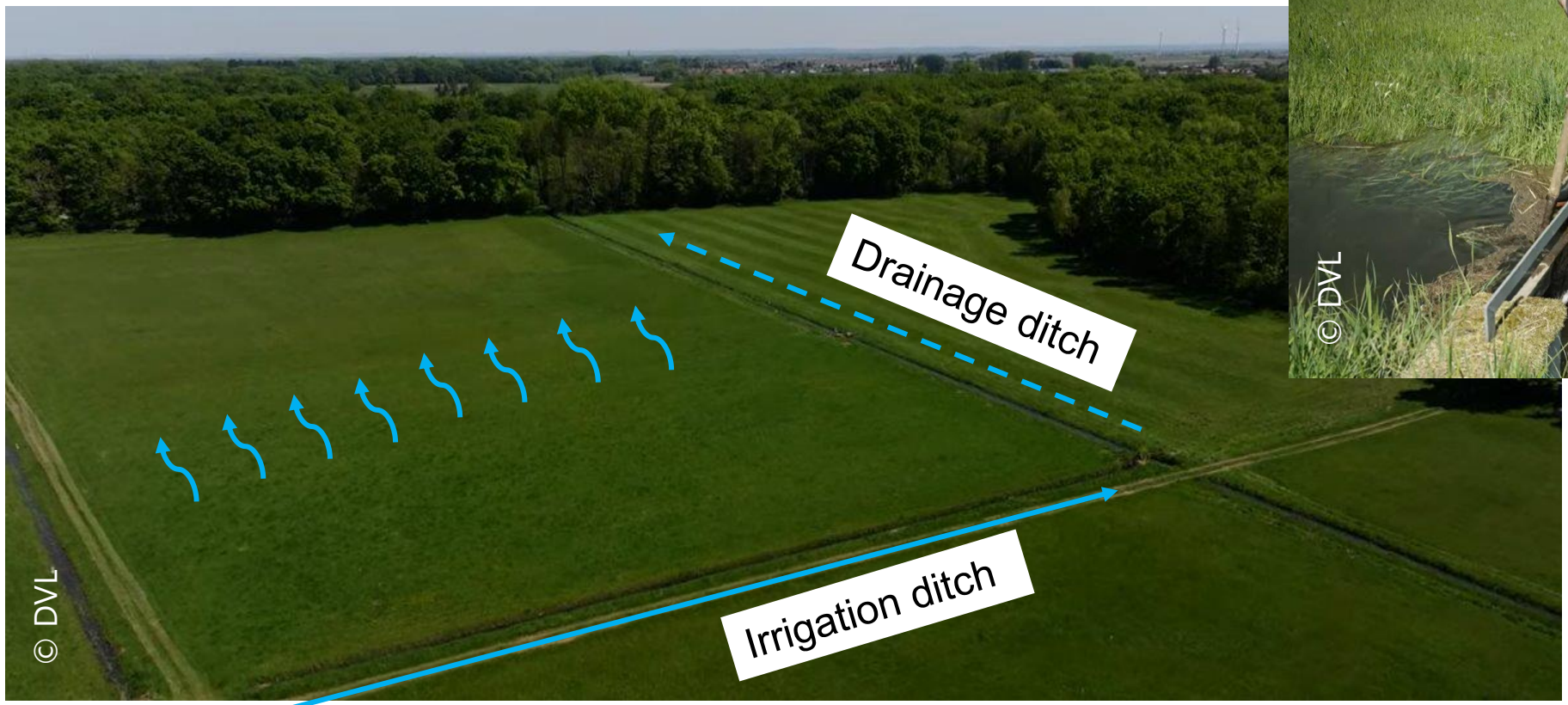
- More fertilizer



Higher crop yield

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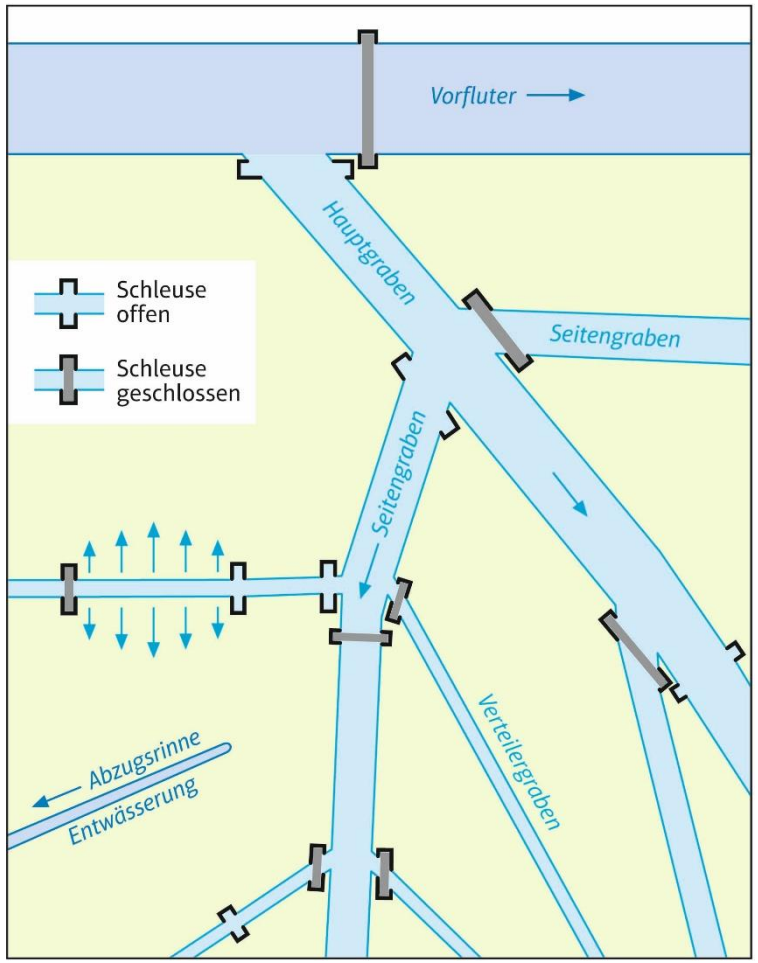
How does a traditional water meadow function?





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How does a traditional water meadow function?



© C. Leibundgut, I. Vonderstraß



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How are traditional water meadows used today?

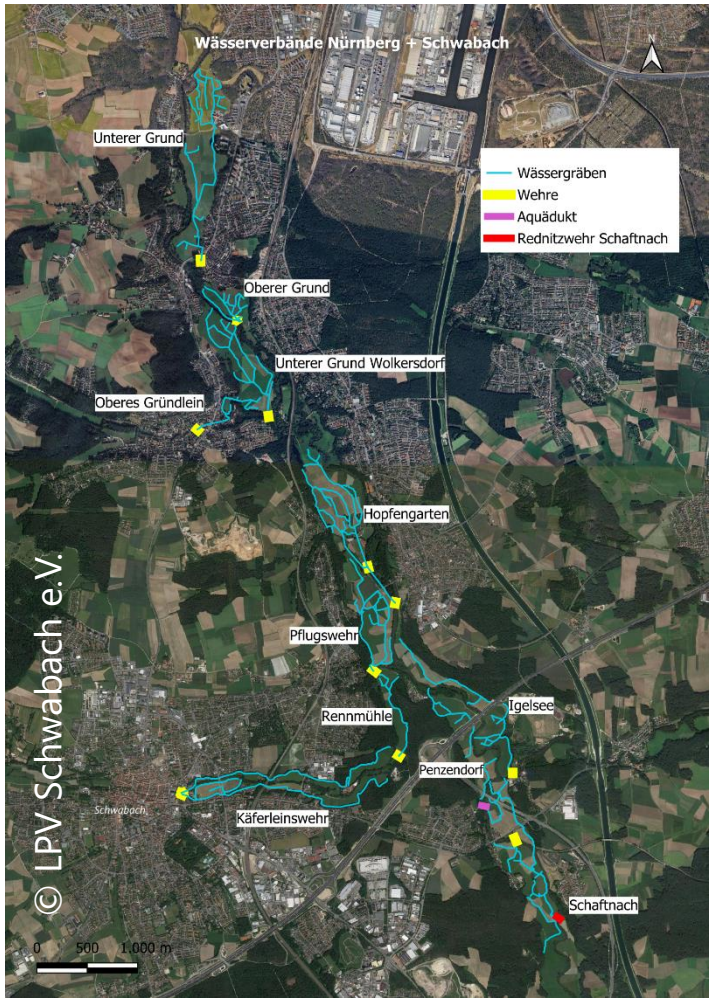
Good-practice examples

Agricultural productivity, dragonflies and air-conditioning in Nürnberg-Schwabach









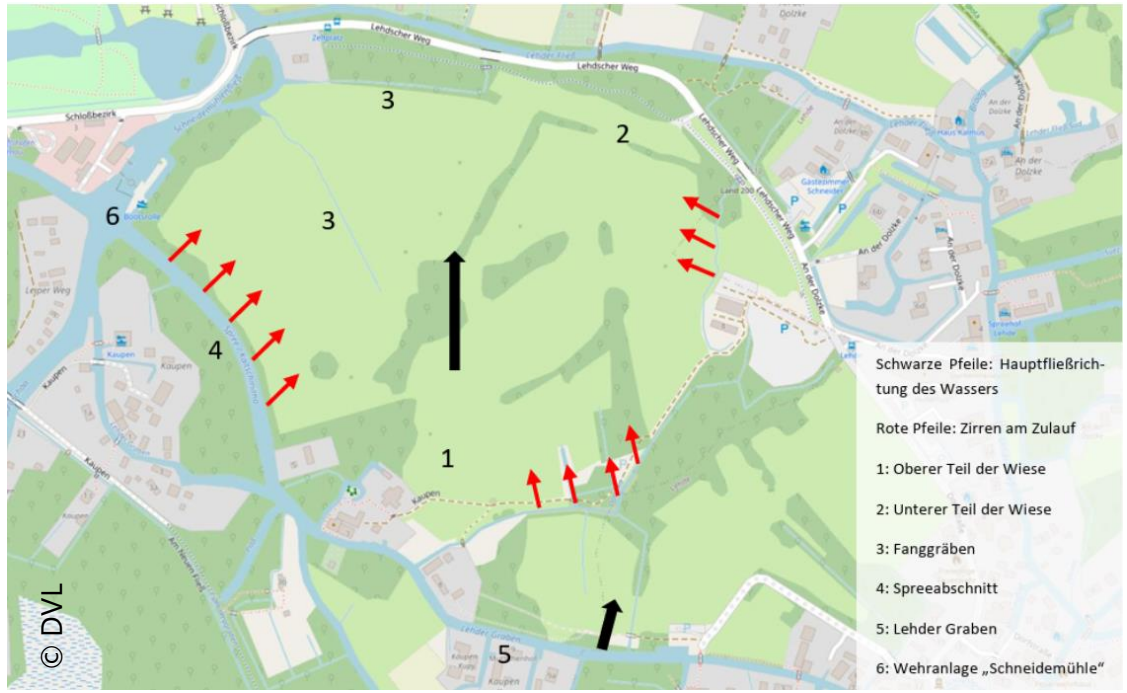
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Breeding ground for fish in the Spree Woods









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Habitat for breeding, resting and overwintering birds in the Elzmeadows







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Amphibian protection, groundwater recharge and restoring a swamp forest in southern Palatinate











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Challenges, conflicts and solutions

Transporting traditional water meadows into the 21st century

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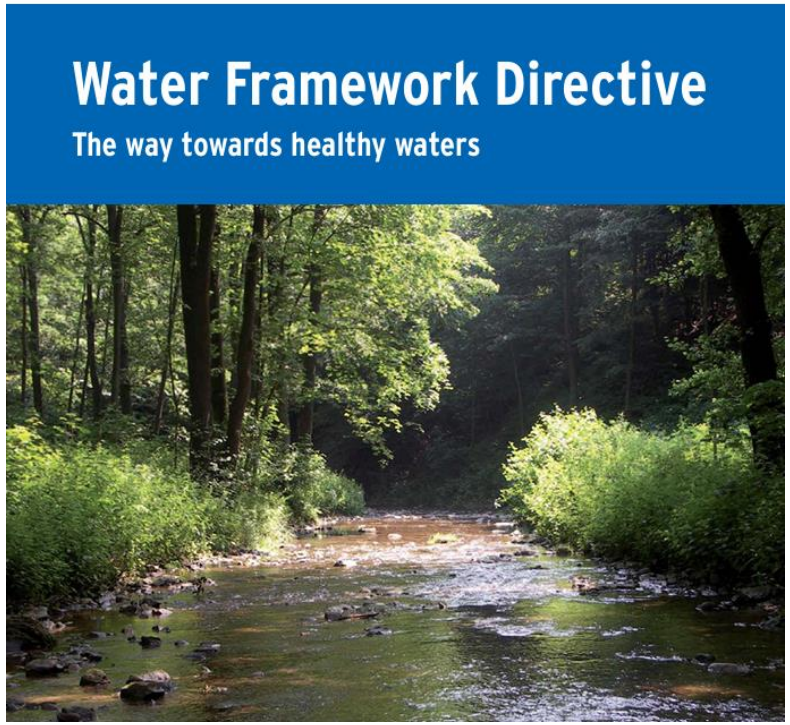
Rules and regulations

Hydrology	Nature conservation and species protection	Fishery and Water Ecology
• Water is a public good • Water protection area • Limited water availability • Competition for water resources • Adjecent land • Topography, geology	• Compatibility with Natura2000-habitat protection • Current species composition • Protected species	• Passability • Chemical and ecological condition

„Fixation“ on naturality and passablity

Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

Umwelt Bundes Amt
For our Environment



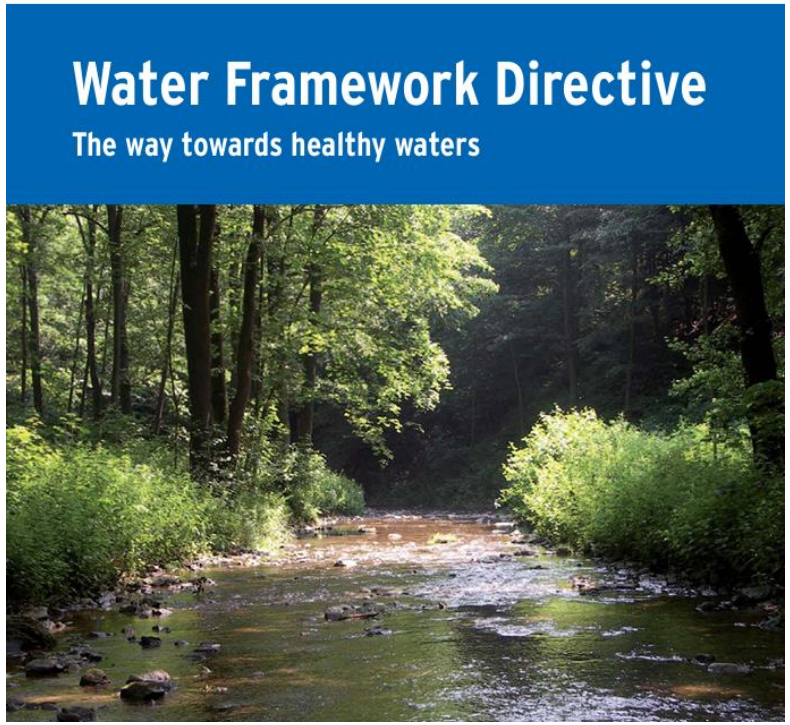
- More effective water retention
- Healthy water management on landscape scale
- Ground water recharge
- Repurposing drainages
- Preventing further deterioration and protecting and enhancing the status of aquatic ecosystems and (…) terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands

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„Fixation“ on naturality and passablity

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Umwelt Bundes Amt
For our Environment



- More effective water retention
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- **Natural and passable water bodies**

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Practical solutions

Fish rakes





Only using water surplus

Water flow detection



Portable solar pump

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Holistic water retention



- We will not be able to implement **nature based solutions** everywhere
- Structural, **anthropogenic solutions** are play an importation part in many regions
- **Conflicting goals and interests** are inevitable in an interdisciplinary field such as water retention
- Our local authorities need **guidelines** to make compromises and informed and unbeaurocratic decisions about water retention

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What can we do to change things for the better?

- Practical water retention handbook
- Seminars, films, good-practice examples
- Comprehensive network including upper and lower administrations
- Presentations on various events
- Political recommendations based on practical experiences



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https://www.waesserwiesen.dvl.org/

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Reactivation of a traditional water meadow

The Queich Meadows and the Landcare Association Southern Palatinate e.V.

The Queich Meadows: How it all started



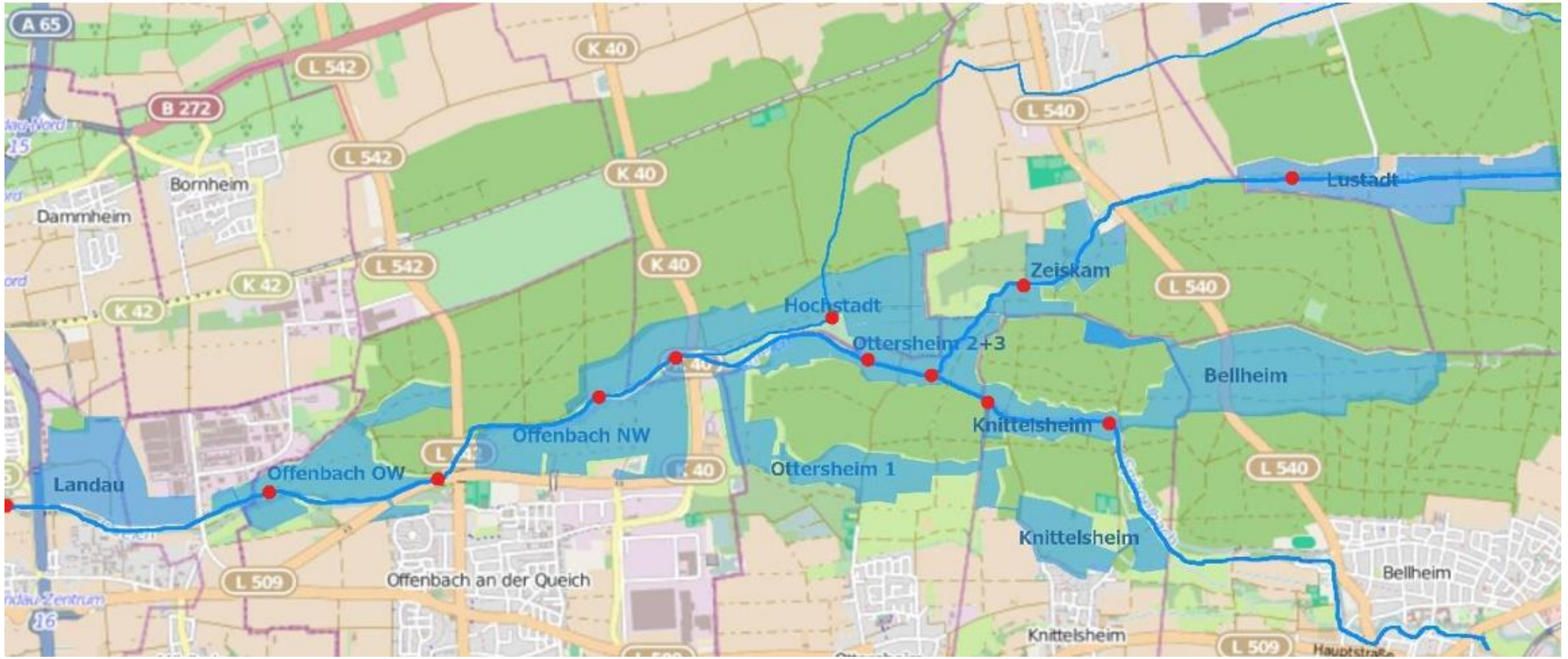
- Meadows about to deteriorate (succession) – region is hot and dry
- Nature conservationists wanted to preserve the open landscape
- Farmers reluctant: It needs to be financially viable!
- Solution: **Reactivate traditional water meadow**

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Landcare organizations: Mediation is key

- **Round table meetings** including farmers, nature conservationists, cultural organizations, water administration, forestry, municipalities
- Honest communication about everyone's interests and concerns
- No hidden intentions or implied accusations
- Landcare associations facilitate a framework, where **equal collaboration** is possible
- Ongoing process

Landcare organizations: Mediation is key

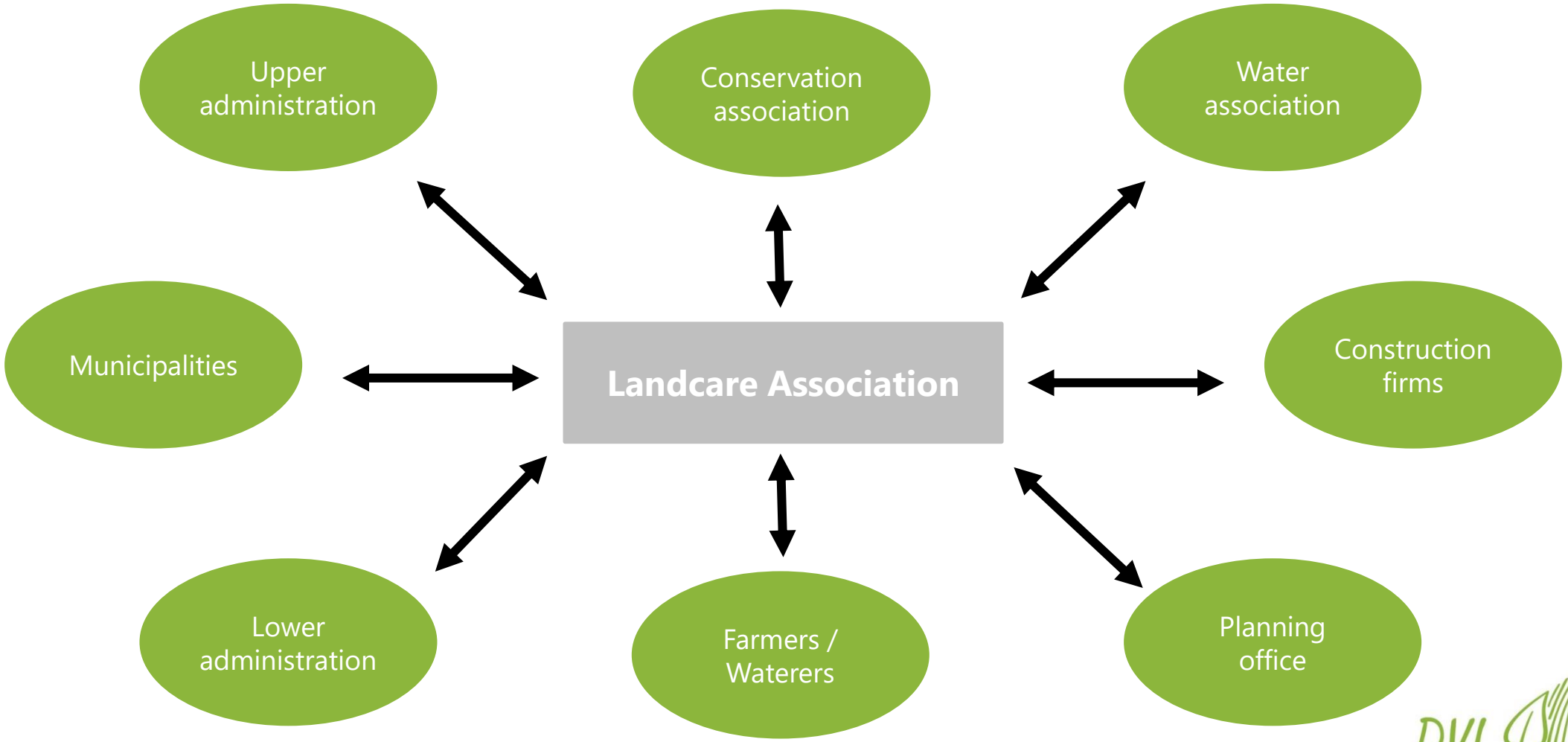


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Landcare organizations: Mediation is key

- Fixed watering dates from April to August
- Each of the eight municipalities are exclusively allowed to irrigate during the agreed days
- All municipalities accept that watering may not be possible due to water scarcity
- This was all agreed on during the roundtable meetings

Landcare organizations: Mediation is key



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Publicity work by the Landcare Association Southern Palatinate e.V.



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The Queich Meadows: What it looks like today



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The Queich Meadows: What it looks like today



Wasserrückhalt durch Grabenstau: Wiesen- und Waldbewässerung in der Pfalz

YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruCyoQ_yGeM

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Traditional water meadows in Franken



WÄSSERWIESEN - mit alter Technik für das Klima der Zukunft

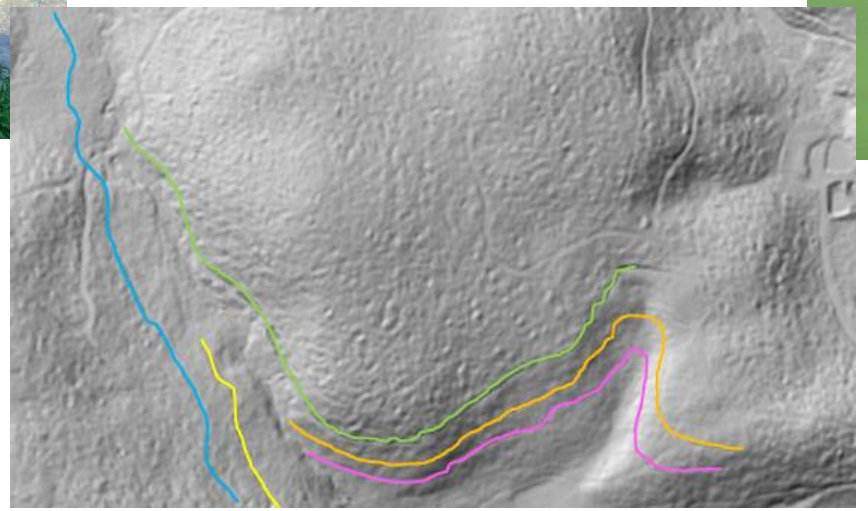
YouTube

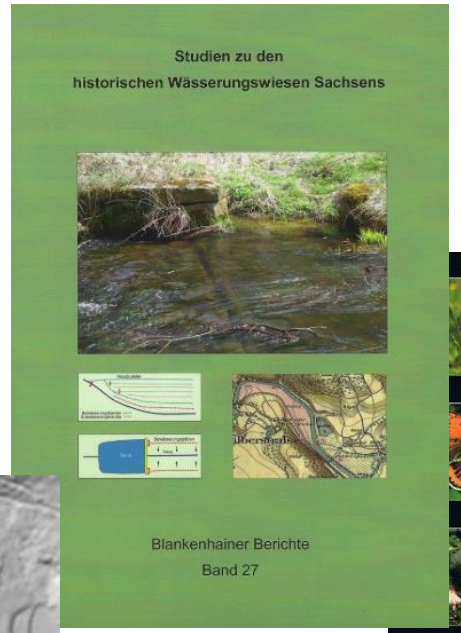
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tC9OPw0GLHw

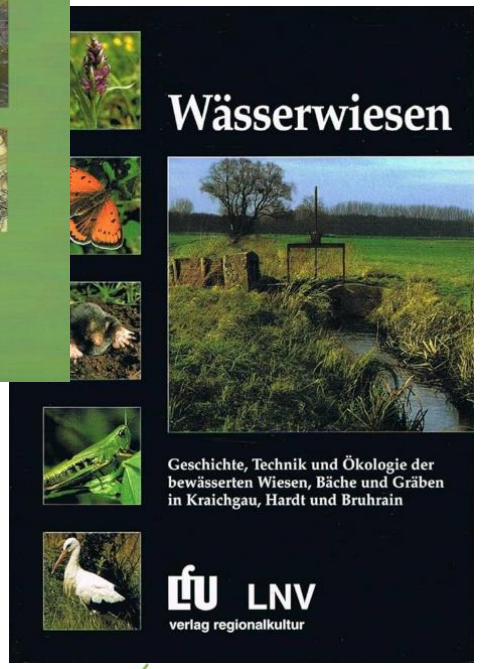
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Support your local traditional water meadow!









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Thank you four your attention

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