

# GROWING COASTS

## **BUILDING WITH NATURE CAN SAVE DROWNING ESTUARIES**



### *Summary*

*The tidal flats of North-Western Europe are highly valued for their natural beauty, productivity and role in the flood protection and local socio- economic activities. However, their existence is threatened by human interferences such as dredging for shipping, construction of dams or blocking off upstream sediment supply. Due to climate change, the rising sea-level rise adds another threat.*

*If we don't act now a large part of the intertidal areas will be drowned before the end of this century! Eco-innovative solutions such as Building with Nature can be the answer to this problem. In the Oosterschelde (Netherlands), sand nourishments are successfully implemented to stop erosion and artificial oyster reefs are being tried out.*

*These Building with Nature experiences, can form a promising solution for climate proofing, not only in drowning estuaries. It secures biodiversity, flood safety and the quality of life, while supporting the objectives of Natura 2000 and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.*

### *Main Benefits*

#### **Economic/job creation**

- » Benefit for tourism and fishery: preservation of national nature reserve and fish stocks.
- » Water safety for urban areas: saving on costs of dike management.
- » Innovation for the dredging sector.

#### **Innovative aspects**

- » Formation of innovative alliances and shared benefits: public and private partnerships.
- » Building with Nature: using natural processes for infrastructure solutions.

- » Preservation of long term safety and natural values of delicate tidal flats, with eco-innovative solutions.

## *Boosters for Implementation*

- » Broad stakeholder commitment.
- » A sound business case.
- » Partners in other estuaries who share comparable problems and are interested in cooperation.

## *Barriers for Further Implementation*

- » A lack of vision and courage of some stakeholders on EU level, e.g. nature conservationists, coastal zone managers.
- » Cost-thinking and risk-avoidance prevails among many stakeholder groups.
- » Lack of partners for upscaling and exporting to other regions.

## *How to Get Over Barriers*

- » A thorough stakeholder analysis, like in the Oosterschelde pilot.
- » Identification of other regions which could benefit from the approach.
- » Information campaign on Building with Nature.
- » Stronger focus on benefit thinking, not on cost thinking.

## *Policy Recommendations*

- » Promote further innovative pilots for estuarine habitats under climate change in the Oosterschelde and elsewhere in Europe.
- » Promote Building with Nature as an export product to the rest of the world.
- » Consider the relevance of Building with Nature solutions to drowning tidal flats in connection with investment and research programs at national and EU level.
- » Spread the word and highlight relevance for implementing EU directives (Bird/ Habitat, Water Framework Directive, Flood Directive) and policy developments.

## *More Information*

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