

Embargo: 00.01 GMT XXX May 2009

MAKING A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

CIWEM's coveted 2009 World of Difference Award has been won by the Lower Dnister River Basin Project, carried out by global management, engineering and development consultancy Mott MacDonald.

In its seventh year of sponsorship by leading global engineering, consulting and construction company, Black & Veatch, CIWEM's World of Difference Award rewards the leading proponents of the practical application of innovative science and engineering for environmental improvement.

The Lower Dnister delta ecosystem, part of the largest river in western Ukraine and Moldova, comprises of 300 square kilometres of wetlands and riparian forests. With well over 700 plant species and over 150 bird species recorded, including numerous internationally endangered wildfowl species, the Dnister delta represents some of the richest areas of biodiversity in the Black Sea region. The wetlands and forest also provide an important function for the Black Sea ecology by filtering nutrients and pollutants transported by the Dnister. However, the delta is suffering from inappropriate water level management related to intensive irrigation, erosion of estuary banks, diffuse pollution of pesticides and fertilisers from vineyards and farms, and outdated and poorly functioning wastewater treatment plants.

The overall objective of the EU funded Lower Dnister River Basin Project was to improve management of the river basin, including water quality and protection and restoration of ecosystems, using the Water Framework Directive as a general reference framework. Over a two year period, Mott MacDonald's experts conducted extensive biological inventories, established a GIS database, undertook public consultations and conducted socio-economic research. They used this material to produce a management plan that contained information on the ecology, population, land use and economic activities of the area, and prepared proposals for the gazettelement of the delta as a National Park. On November 13, 2008, the park was officially established under Ukraine Law.

Wim Verheugt, Mott MacDonald's project manager said:

"The Lower Dnister River Basin Project reflects the aims and objectives of CIWEM's World of Difference Award in many ways. It has delivered a wide range of long-term, sustainable solutions to a host of environmental issues affecting one of Eastern Europe's major rivers. It has also facilitated the creation of a major National Park which in itself is an innovation for this region."

The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust's project 'Wetland Management for Sustainable Livelihoods at Koshi Tappu, Nepal', received a special commendation for CIWEM's World of Difference Award. This project addressed the issues of unsustainable exploitation at Ramsar Site Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve through proper water and environmental management, education and research.

Seb Buckton, Community Wetlands Programme Manager at The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, said:

"People living around Koshi are dependent on wetland resources, but pressures on people's livelihoods are bringing them into conflict with the reserve, because people perceive that the site's conservation means reduced benefits for them. Many people view the reserve negatively, but even those that don't are often forced to exploit resources in a damaging way. Our project has focussed on identifying innovative livelihood options that provide a real benefit to people, without resulting in unsustainable use. Key to success has been identifying marginalised groups of people and empowering them to take control over their resource use. As a result, local people are starting to recognise the benefits to them and their families of looking after the wetlands at Koshi."

As well as receiving a framed certificate and cheque for £3,000, the winner will be presented with a specially-commissioned trophy designed by 1st year art student, Stephanie Moakes of Reigate School of Art Design and Media, as part of a project created by Black & Veatch to encourage students near its Redhill office to become involved with industry. The trophy will be presented at a prestigious ceremony, hosted by CIWEM, at an award ceremony at the CIWEM Annual Dinner at Draper's Hall in London on 28 May 2009.

Speaking on behalf of the award's sponsor, Matthew Nott, Managing Director of Black & Veatch's UK Government & Industry business said,

"We are proud to continue our support for the World of Difference Award. In keeping with our belief, we are keen to encourage and celebrate those projects, products or services that make a positive difference to how people work and live."

Paul Horton, CIWEM's Director of International Development and judge for the World of Difference Award, congratulated the winners by saying:

"2009 marked an extremely successful year for CIWEM's World of Difference Award and we are very grateful to Black & Veatch for their continued support as sponsor. We received a record number of high quality entries from countries including China, South Africa, Nepal, Italy, USA and Uganda. All of the judges were extremely encouraged by the good work taking place globally. It was not easy to reach a final decision but the Lower Dnister River Basin Project stood out to me and the other judges as outstanding. And the Wetland Management for Sustainable Livelihoods at Koshi Tappu well deserved their highly commended status. Congratulations to all involved."

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Editor's note

1. The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) is an independent professional body and a registered charity, advancing the science and practice of water and environmental management for a clean, green and sustainable world.
2. Black & Veatch Corporation is a leading global engineering, consulting and construction company specializing in infrastructure development in energy, water, information and government markets. B&V Water, Black & Veatch's water business, provides innovative, technology-based solutions to utilities, governments and industries worldwide. The employee-owned company has more than 90 offices worldwide and is ranked on the

Forbes "500 Largest Private Companies in the United States" listing. More information can be found at www.bv.com

3. Information on all of CIWEM's awards can be found at <http://www.ciwem.org/awards/>