

Integrated Watershed Management - Ecohydrology & Phytotechnology -

- Manual -



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

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First edition 2004

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UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATION

This publication is printed on paper made from 100 per cent recycled material.

The photographs on the front cover page are (top to bottom): 1. Willows - used for water quality improvement and bioenergy production (Photo: Nyga); 2. Engineering device for purifying water using aquatic macrophytes - City of Rostov on Don, Russia (photo: Santiago-Fandino); 3. Pilica River floodplain, part of a UNESCO/UNEP Demonstration Project (photo: Wagner-Lotkowska); 4. The Earth from space (photo: NASA).

The scheme on the back cover page is modified from Zalewski (2002). International Journal of Ecohydrology and Hydrobiology. vol. 2, no 1-4. Proceedings of the final Conference of the First Phase of the IHP-V Project 2.3/2.4 on Ecohydrology "The application of Ecohydrology to Water Resources Development and Management". Venice, Italy 16-18 September 2001.

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■ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Manual is one of the results of the ongoing co-operation between the United Nations Environment Programme - Division of Technology, Industry and Economics - International Environmental Technology Centre (UNEP-DTIE-IETC) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization - International Hydrological Programme (UNESCO-IHP), represented by the Regional Bureau for Science in Europe (UNESCO-ROSTE). A printed version has been separately produced by UNESCO IHP (ISBN: 92-9220-011-9, ISBN: 83-908410-8-8).

The Manual has been produced with the assistance and advice of the members of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) of the Ecohydrology Initiative of UNESCO-IHP and in some cases with their direct participation.

The manual contains results of the first joint UNEP-IETC/UNESCO-IHP Ecohydrology & Phytotechnology Demonstration Project „Application of Ecohydrology and Phytotechnology for Water Resources Management and Sustainable Development”, on the Pilica River catchment in the Republic of Poland. This was developed and implemented by the International Centre for Ecology, Polish Academy of Sciences (ICE-PAS) and Centre for Ecohydrological Studies, University of Lodz (CEHS UL).

This publication contains results of research supported by grants: European Commission projects: EC-EVK1-2001-00182 - acronym TOXIC; EC-EVK2-2002-00546 - acronym MIDI-CHIP; EVK1 -CT-2001-00094 - acronym FAME; Polish Committee of Scientific Research grants: 6 PO4F 065 19, 3 PO4G 057 22, 6 PO4F 067 19, 6 PO4G 112 20.

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Special thanks to Bogusława Brewinska-Zaras and Marta Rogalewicz for their help in preparing the final version of the manual.

■ PREFACE

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002 and the 3rd World Water Forum held in Kyoto, Japan in 2003 highlighted the importance of the UN Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. Both events emphasized the importance of elaborating strong science to support sustainable development policy.

Further, the International Council for Scientific Unions (ICSU) declared that in the twenty-first century science „must become more problem-focused and apply an interdisciplinary approach to sustainable development issues in order for science to become more policy relevant”. Likewise, the UN World Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD), besides supporting the development and application of sound science towards sustainable development, also underscored the importance of developing and transferring environmentally sound technologies.

As the twenty-first century begins, it has been recognized that successfully managing water resources is an essential component of achieving sustainable development. However, due to the anthropogenic modification of the hydrological cycle by deforestation, urbanization and irrigation, water resources have been overexploited, degraded and wasted, resulting in higher risks to human health, economic and social development as well as to the functioning of ecosystems and the preservation of the environment.

In light of this scenario, there is a need to develop a novel, environmental management approach within the context of Integrated Watershed Management (IWM). This is where ecohydrology as well as the application of Environmentally Sound Technologies (ESTs) such as phytotechnology constitute a new dimension.

The concept of ecohydrology and its scientific foundations were developed by UNESCO-IHP over the past few decades. The integration of the two components - hydrology and ecology - by means of regulating hydrological, biotic and landscape interactions and processes, has contributed to improving ecosystems' resistance to stress. The concept of phytotechnology, developed by the UNEP-International Environmental Technology Center, encompasses a variety of environmental approaches and technologies based on the ecosystem services that plants provide. The use of phytotechnologies, together with the development of ecohydrology, can help prevent, control and even reverse the degradation of water resources.

Considering the complementarities of ecohydrology and phytotechnology and, taking into account the calls for an interdisciplinary approach by the WSSD, the 3rd WWF and the ICSU, UNESCO-IHP, UNESCO-Regional Bureau for Science in Europe (ROSTE) and UNEP-IETC merged their efforts through a number of projects and activities, including the present publication. The „Manual for Integrated Watershed Management” follows on the „Guidelines for the Integrated Management of the Watershed”, published in 2002 by the same agencies, in which the general philosophy of ecohydrology and phytotechnology was put together for the first time, providing the reader an understanding of the concepts and their application to the integrated management of watersheds.

Due to the great interest generated by the Guidelines, and in order to provide practitioners with practical information about how to implement the concepts and approaches considered within ecohydrology and phytotechnology, the Scientific Advisory Committee of Ecohydrology IHP-VI and UNEP-IETC decided to produce the present publication. The manual has been designed to improve decision makers' identifica-

tion capabilities and understanding of mechanisms used to solve problems related to water resource degradation within watersheds. It is also expected that a larger audience would benefit from the present publication (i.e., technical experts, scientists, NGOs and others interested in water resource management.)

Bearing in mind once again that one of the major questions in achieving sustainable development is „whether scientific evidence can successfully overcome social, economic and political resistance” (Kennedy, Science 2003), we sincerely hope that the new approaches of ecohydrology and phytotechnology, developed in IHP-V and VI and supported by UNEP-IETC, will generate positive socioeconomic benefits for those living in watersheds in addition to improving the water resources quality.

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