



Press release

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A successful balance between hydropower production and nature conservation

Finhaut, Sion – After more than ten years of successful collaboration, Nant de Drance SA, WWF and Pro Natura give a positive assessment of the environmental compensation measures planned for the construction of the Nant de Drance pumped storage power plant. Fifteen projects will help to balance the environmental impacts of the power plant's construction and its connection to the European electricity grid. Through constructive dialogue, this exemplary collaboration between a hydroelectric company and environmental organisations has succeeded in finding the right balance between energy production and nature conservation.

Since the Nant de Drance pumped storage power plant project first began, Nant de Drance SA, WWF and Pro Natura have been working closely together to minimise the environmental impact of the power plant's construction and its connection to the high-voltage grid. Nant de Drance SA is implementing fifteen environmental measures to offset its ecological impact, investing a total of CHF 22 million. WWF and Pro Natura are part of an advisory group which also includes representatives from relevant public authorities, the canton of Valais and the Federal Office of Energy. This group discusses plans for the measures and monitors their implementation, with each participant putting forward their ideas to best serve nature's interests.

Most of the fifteen environmental compensation measures aim to recreate specific biotopes locally, especially wetlands, in order to encourage recolonisation of the area by certain animal and plant species that are rare or endangered in Switzerland. In addition, Nant de Drance is carrying out this work with service providers across the region, in line with the legal framework relating to public procurements, and so that its investment can benefit the local economy.

Wetlands in the spotlight

The fifteen environmental compensation projects are either currently underway, have already been completed or will soon be completed. For example, in Vernayaz, a 580 metre stretch of the Lantze Canal has undergone renaturation. The area provides fish fauna with favourable conditions in which to spawn. It can also provide them with a good habitat in general. Sedges, bulrushes and willowherbs, characteristic plant species of temporarily flooded environments, are already recolonising the newly created banks. In the immediate vicinity, the black alder forest of Fond du Mont is enjoying being in the water again and temporary ponds are already occupied by the yellow-bellied toad, a small toad rare in the Valais.

In Dorénaz, at the lower end of the Alesse stream, an aquatic environment has been recreated from two bodies of water. Since their water level varies according to the level of the nearby Rhône, part of the banks will sometimes be in water and sometimes dry. This should allow the fauna and flora typical of this type of environment to become established.



Measures implemented in seven municipalities, from the lowlands to the mountains

Water is the main focus of the compensation measures carried out by Nant de Drance SA. However, dry agricultural areas have not been forgotten. In Salvan, meadows and pastures have been reopened to enable people to use them and to stop them becoming wastelands.

The fifteen compensation measures are divided among the lowlands and mountains and, in addition to Vernayaz, Dorénaz and Salvan, mentioned above, have been or will soon be completed in the municipalities of Finhaut, Martigny, Saxon and Trient.

The fifteen environmental compensation measures

A list of the fifteen environmental compensation measures being carried out by Nant de Drance is available [in the appendix](#).

For more information about Nant de Drance, please visit: www.nant-de-drance.ch

For more information about WWF, please visit: <https://www.wwf-valaisromand.ch/>

For more information about Pro Natura, please visit: <https://www.pronatura-vs.ch/fr>

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Nant de Drance SA in brief

The Nant de Drance project involves building a pumped storage power plant in a cavern located between the two existing reservoirs of Emosson and Vieux Emosson in the Valais. With a total capacity of 900 MW, the Nant de Drance power plant will be key for the stability of the Swiss and European electricity grids. Nant de Drance SA, whose shareholders are Alpiq (39%), SBB Swiss Railways (36%), IWB (15%) and FMV (10%), is responsible for the construction, commissioning and operation of the pumped storage plant.

WWF Valais in brief

WWF Valais is committed to maintaining and developing biodiversity. It campaigns for the elimination of fossil fuels and nuclear energy and for their replacement with renewable energy sources. It is an advocate of measured and sustainable use of renewable natural resources and sustainable land use planning. It is also concerned with reducing waste and threats to our environment. It strives to implement these different objectives both by raising public awareness and by carrying out conservation and renaturation projects in the field.

Pro Natura in brief

Pro Natura's motto is "Switzerland's Number One in Conservation". The main focus of the organisation, which was founded in 1909, is to conserve natural environments and the animal and plant species that live there, without excluding human beings. The Pro Natura Valais branch is well established in the canton and currently manages some forty nature reserves. It also develops numerous partnerships (with the State of Valais, municipalities, companies and private individuals) in order to create and expand areas that are conducive to biodiversity and to raise public awareness of the need to preserve a rich and diversified natural environment.