

Oostvaardersplassen — Dutch 'New Wilderness' Rewilding Experiment and the 2017–18 Winter Die-Off (Cautionary Case)

PES & Nature-Based Solutions · Good practice · Netherlands

Quality score: 20/100

Evidence strength: Cautionary / limited

Summary

A 5,600 ha Dutch reserve left to non-intervention grazing by Konik ponies, Heck cattle and red deer; over 3,000 animals died in winter 2017–18, forcing the 2018 Van Geel covenant to end the hands-off approach — a cautionary case on rewilding without predators or space.

Key dimensions

Dimension	Score
Carbon — sequestration / storage, evidenced	0/3
Biodiversity — conservation / improvement, evidenced	2/3
Water & soil — retention, infiltration, erosion control	0/3
Fire resilience — risk reduction, evidenced	0/3
Governance, certification & transferability	1/3

Evaluated by C-NAPSE

Data sources

[C-NAPSE web research](#) — accessed 2026-10-02

[Staatsbosbeheer / Province of Flevoland](#) — accessed 2026-10-02

[Wikipedia — Oostvaardersplassen](#) — accessed 2026-10-02

[WHYY — The Netherlands' grand rewilding experiment, gone haywire](#) — accessed 2026-10-02

[Theunissen 2019, The Oostvaardersplassen Fiasco \(Isis\)](#) — accessed 2026-10-02

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