

Moorland Restoration Switzerland

Rewilding drained moors to restore the ecosystem and allow wildlife to flourish



Despite a constitutional mandate, only a small part of moorland in Switzerland has been restored to date. It's estimated that 0.74 million tCO₂ escapes from well over 200,000 ha of drained moors each year. Not only would rewetting them contribute massively to climate protection, but also positively affect wildlife, improve flood protection, enhance the Swiss landscape as well as creating sustainable work opportunities for local businesses.

The Context

In Switzerland, almost 90% of moors have been destroyed in the past 200 years. According to the BAFU, an estimated 0.74 million tCO₂ escape each year from over 200,000 ha of drained moors, accounting for over 2% of total Swiss emissions. Despite a legal mandate in place since 1976 to restore drained moors, the threatening drainage continues to due to lack of funds.

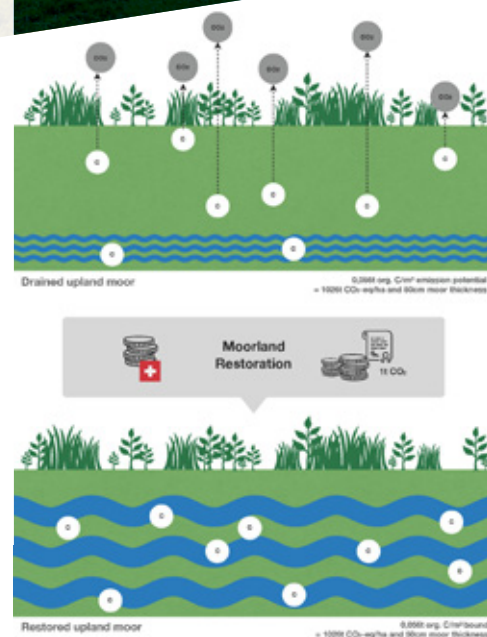
The Project

Located in Switzerland, the project aims to rewet the moorlands by blocking drainage ditches and providing additional protection measures. The blockage construction method helps to raise water levels and prevent the degradation of organic material storing large amounts of carbon. This means that oxygen is no longer able to penetrate into the drained soil and the carbon bound in the moor can no longer escape into the atmosphere. Another method used to preserve the moor and promote native animal and plant species is to ensure regular pruning or grazing in order to prevent scrubland to take over. The project also creates a buffer zone around the moor to prevent chemical fertilizers potentially used by surrounding cultivation areas from contaminating the moors and disrupting the water balance.

The Benefits

The restoration of moorlands protects many endangered native tree species, wildlife and the habitats of rare birds such as the capercaillie. By acting as a natural sponge of rainfall, restored moorlands can also offer great protection against river flooding, and when marsh systems are replenished, their function to filter harmful waste and purify water is restored. This project also reveals how climate-smart activities create sustainable job opportunities because the timber cutting, construction work and transport services that are needed for restoration are mainly carried out by local firms, boosting their specialised skills and ensuring that the low-carbon transition is just and benefits society as much as it does the planet.

Although moors make up only 3% of the land mass, they store 1/3 of the carbon bound to our planet - more than all forests combined!



Fresh water

moorlands help replenish ground aquifers and act as a natural water filter by removing harmful particles



Protection against river flooding

by acting as natural sponges of rainfall



1,000+ tCO₂/ha

will be mitigated through the replenishment of an upland moor



Habitat protection

in Switzerland, about 1/4 of endangered national flora lives in moorlands

For more information on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, please visit: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>