



Wetlands and ski resorts in the French Alps: main issues and innovative ideas for the preservation of wetlands in ski areas

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This presentation is a synthesis of a symposium held last October in Cemagref, Grenoble with contributions from scientists as well as lift operators, NGO's, and administrations. In the context of global change, ski resorts must rethink their development models. The diversification of the touristic offer is encouraged and the specificity of the mountain territory is at the heart of a sustainable development. In this context, the preservation of interesting and fragile habitats such as wetlands is topical.

Wetlands have many recognized functions: flooding reduction, water remediation, fertilization, biodiversity conservation... In mountain areas, wetlands are small and scattered. They are of special interest in particular for their role in biodiversity conservation and for their cultural and recreational benefits. However, in ski areas, wetlands can interact with the ski activity. Indeed, wetlands can speed up snow melting in spring and they often occupy ledges, which are strategic positions for the establishment of ski resort's facilities. The development of ski resorts can lead to the destruction or the deterioration of wetlands because of hydrologic interferences, fill in, pollution, etc.

However, a few judicious steps can be taken to reduce or suppress these negative effects. In the Alps, geographical and administrative tools have been developed to help the decisions of ski-resort's administrators. Meetings between lift-operators, administrators of protected areas scientists and NGO's have also proved efficient when done at an early stage of a project, as shown by the example of the ski-resort "Les Saisies".