

Das Manheimer Loch und das Wasser

(English version)

Ecocide with fortelling

An important stepping stone within the habitat network between the Hambach Forest and the Flora-Fauna Habitat (FFH) Steinheide was, until the end of January 2025, the 'Sündenwäldchen' near Kerpen-Manheim with its 6 hectares of area, an English oak and hornbeam forest. Strictly protected animal species such as the hazel dormouse and Bechstein's bat had their habitat there, as also did protected trees.

The Hambach Forest, Sündenwäldchen and Steinheide were connected by the Manheim ditch and its vegetation of trees and hardwood shrubs on both sides. This ditch, among many others, is indispensable for the region's water balance. Greenpeace wrote: "Clearing the "Sündenwald" as part of a vital biotope network (...) is an environmental crime. Anyone who wants to preserve the Hambach Forest must not cut off its lifelines. The lignite company RWE, the Green Minister for Economic Affairs Mona Neubaur and the Green Minister for the Environment Oliver Krischer must immediately stop preparations for clearing."

Ecocide with fortelling

According to RWE, the material from the so-called Manheim Bay is to be used for the construction of stable and safe embankments in the Elsdorf area, among other places. Once again, Germany's best soils are to be irretrievably destroyed with the approval of a state government. It is madness to apply this loess soil with its very high soil quality (~ 95 out of 100) to the inner slope of the Sophienhöhe so that agriculture can be practised there in a few years' time. Fillings never achieve the quality of natural soil structures. Terms are also being removed from memory: who still knows the 'Jülich-Zülpicher-Börde'?

The small number of lorries loaded with material from the Manheim Loch heading for Elsdorf raises the question: what happens to the majority of the dredged material? Can it be ruled out that RWE will use the remaining material, mostly sand and gravel, from the open-cast mine to make money?

Ecocide with fortelling

By dredging so close to existing forest structures, even more water is being extracted from the root regions of the trees, putting the survival of these forests at serious risk. The Hambach Forest must not be turned into a peninsula by further excavation. Due to the nearby gravel pits south of the Hambach Forest, large quantities of groundwater are already missing.

Time of fairy tales

In some plans the Manheim Hole referred into an Energy Bay and is praised by glossy presentations with floating PV systems and wind turbines standing in this lake, to finally cloak Europe's largest CO₂ emitter under a green mantle of lies. Just as ambitious are the ideas for a pumped storage power plant between the Manheim Loch as the upper lake and the Hambach “residual lake” as the lower lake.

Incidentally: The Manheim hole will not be able to be filled with water, because according to recent hydrogeological studies, the lake level will remain 60 metres below the top of the terrain and the “bay” is only to be dredged to a depth of 60 metres. Spot the mistake!

New element of crime: ecocide

In 2024, the European Union adopted the Directive on Environmental Crime. This directive refers to ecocide for the first time. According to this directive, large corporations such as RWE can now also be prosecuted. The German Bundestag is called upon to transpose this directive into national law without delay.

In order to prevent further damage to nature and the environment, there must be an immediate halt to lignite mining and an end to the destruction of land by RWE. Neither in Hambach nor in Garzweiler should opencast mining be expanded. It is imperative that the “residual lakes” are to be reduced in size.

We call for a genuine moratorium (reflection) by independent experts in order to finally find nature-based solutions to the upcoming problems. We must immediately break out of the spiral of profit maximisation by groups of companies, environmental damage to landscapes and cost transfer to future generations.

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