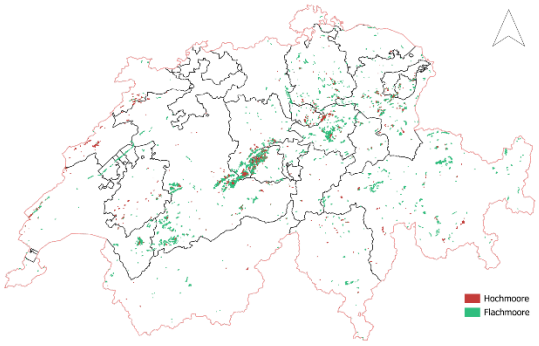


Raised bog and fen at Lai Nair © Johannes Rebsamen



Inventoried fens and raised bogs cover approximately 0.6% of Switzerland.

Peatland Conservation for Biodiversity & Climate

Switzerland's remaining peatlands and organic soils are vital for climate protection, biodiversity conservation, our quality of life and a functioning water cycle. Yet these ecosystems are severely threatened. The project helps safeguard these valuable ecosystems and their diverse functions in the long term by improving enabling conditions, accelerating the implementation of conservation measures, initiating and supporting restoration projects, building communities and alliances, and strengthening knowledge and capacities. Sound analyses, close collaboration with relevant stakeholders and targeted measures enable effective protection, ecological enhancement and site-appropriate use of these valuable ecosystems.

Key figures: Importance of peatlands for climate, people and nature in Switzerland

24.000 ha
inventoried peatland,
76% with conservation deficit

28.000 ha
of organic soil store
ca. **119 Mio.** tons of CO_2

25% of threatened vascular plants depend on peatlands

Peatland conservation only succeeds through **collaboration** with authorities, agriculture & the public

Peatland Conservation for Biodiversity & Climate

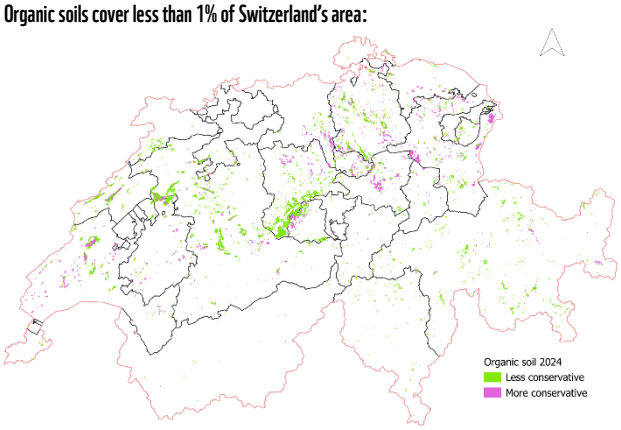
Project area and key definitions

The project operates throughout Switzerland. Specific activities are implemented jointly with regional WWF offices wherever there is both a need and an opportunity for action. Particular attention is given to regions with extensive peatlands and organic soils.

Peatlands: Raised bogs and fens with characteristic vegetation adapted to wet, nutrient-poor conditions. They often have organic soils but may also occur on other soil types. Peatlands of national importance are protected under the Swiss Federal Constitution.
Organic soils: Soils with a high proportion of organic matter (peat), consisting of incompletely decomposed plant remains. They occur both in peatlands and on formerly peat-covered areas, many of which have since been drained and are now used for agriculture.

Note: Peatlands and organic soils may overlap geographically; their respective areas should therefore not be added together.

Organic soils cover less than 1% of Switzerland's area:



Background & Challenge

- Many peatlands and organic soils in Switzerland have been heavily altered by historical drainage and intensive use. The impacts persist today: around 90% of the original peatland area has already been lost. Remaining peatlands continue to dry out, and species specialised for these habitats are steadily declining. Raised bogs lost 6.5% of their area in just six years (2017–2023).
- Of the 551 raised and transitional bogs and 1,335 fens, implementation of the biotope ordinances is inadequate for 66% and 80%, respectively (2021 status report). Urgent restoration is needed in 80% of raised bogs and 30% of fens.
- An estimated 28,000–32,700 ha of organic soils remain today, of which approximately 17,000 ha are drained and used for agriculture. In the long term, these areas lose fertility and water-storage capacity and release around 0.7 million tons of CO_2 each year (10% of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions).

Project concept

Switzerland's peatlands and organic soils are severely degraded and are increasingly losing their important functions for biodiversity, water regulation, climate and soil protection. The project aims to safeguard and restore these ecosystems over the long term. It will strengthen their protection and the enabling conditions, initiate and support restoration, and promote land use suited to local conditions. Through collaboration with cantons, municipalities, the agricultural sector and other stakeholders, the project aims to systematically improve and safeguard the functions of peatlands and organic soils across Switzerland by 2050.

Project Objectives (Outcomes)

1. Cantons and municipalities appropriately integrate peatlands and organic soils into at least 15 important plans, strategies, instruments and pilot projects.
2. Cantons and municipalities improve and accelerate implementation of conservation requirements for at least 36 inventoried peatland sites of local, regional or national importance.
3. Landowners, land managers, specialist organisations and public authorities improve the ecological quality of at least 10 degraded peatlands.
4. Communities and alliances in focus regions carry out at least 36 activities to protect and enhance peatlands and organic soils.

Measures

1. **Improve enabling conditions:** We strengthen the integration of peatland and organic soil protection into policy, spatial planning and agriculture, and promote practical approaches to land management that preserve peat.
2. **Consistently implement conservation obligations:** We support cantons and municipalities in effectively applying existing protection requirements, addressing shortcomings and preventing further damage to peatlands.
3. **Advance restoration:** Together with landowners, land managers and authorities, we initiate and support rewetting and ecological enhancement projects to improve degraded peatlands.
4. **Strengthen knowledge, alliances and engagement:** We promote knowledge-sharing, networking and engagement among authorities, the agricultural sector, conservation organisations and the public, enabling conservation and restoration measures to be implemented effectively over the long term.



"We want to protect peatlands effectively, make their benefits tangible, and bring people, agriculture and nature together."

Lynn Julen,
WWF Project Manager for Peatland Conservation

Project duration

3 years, January 2026 to December 2028 (Phase 2)

Project costs

Total costs: 1'179'000 CHF

Contact

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