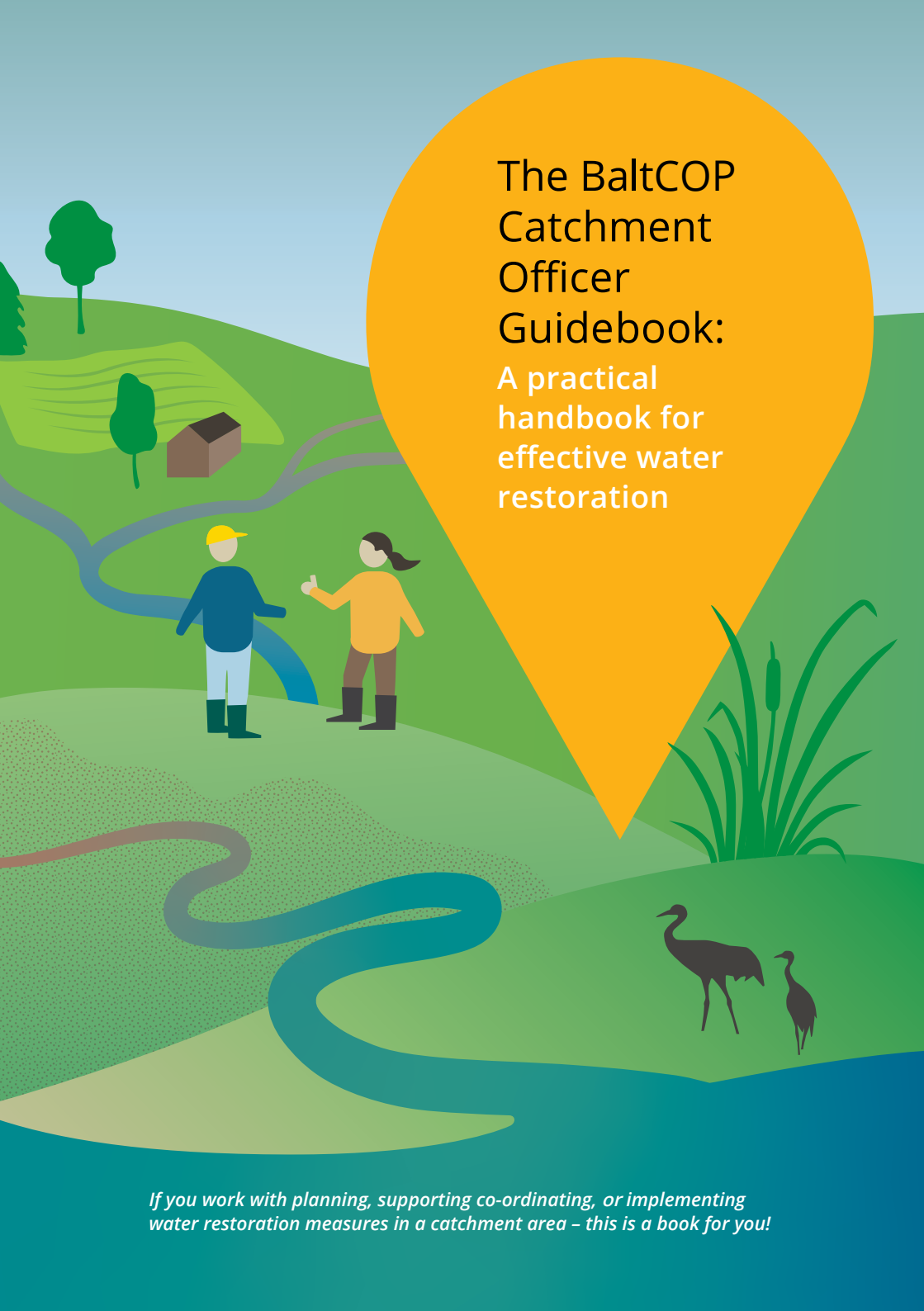




The BaltCOP Catchment Officer Guidebook:

A practical
handbook for
effective water
restoration

*If you work with planning, supporting co-ordinating, or implementing
water restoration measures in a catchment area – this is a book for you!*

The Interreg BaltCOP Project

THIS GUIDEBOOK HAS BEEN DEVELOPED within the framework of the Interreg BaltCOP project, which aims to strengthen catchment-based coordination and promote effective restoration across the Baltic Sea region. BaltCOP integrates local pilots, knowledge exchange, expert contributions, and cross-border collaboration, all of which have shaped the content of this Guidebook.

The project recognises that successful implementation of water-related measures relies on collaboration between landowners, communities, and authorities as well as coordination and financial support. Catchment Officers play a central role in bridging these groups, ensuring that ideas can progress from concept to implementation.

This publication was developed through a strategic collaboration between World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Nyköpingsåarnas Vattenvårdsförbund (NVF), combining international conservation expertise with specialized regional insight to ensure the long-term health of our shared waters.

The BaltCOP Catchment Officer Guidebook:

**A practical
handbook for
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Version 1, 2026

Interreg  Co-funded by
the European Union

Central Baltic Programme

BaltCOP



**Pasaules
Dabas
Fonds**



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This guidebook is designed as a practical companion for people working hands-on in local water catchments and restoration sites – whether you are a Catchment Officer, based in a municipality, involved through a water council or organisation, or working in another role that supports local restoration. It aims to make the work of planning, coordinating, and implementing measures easier to understand and easier to carry out in practice. Experiences from a 5-year Swedish programme named “LEVA” / “Living waters” have showcased the potential of this approach: Catchment Officers in 20 pilot catchments helped develop planned measures for more than 25 million Euro in water restoration and management. This is more than four times the cost of the coordination itself and contributed to scale action in all catchments. The potential of local catchment officers to be a catalyst for implementation has thereafter been spread and in 2025 there were more than 50 officers working in Sweden.

The structure of this guidebook mirrors the typical journey of a catchment-based measure, from early engagement and identifying the opportunity to navigating administrative steps, implementation and long-term follow-up. Each chapter focuses on one part of this process and can be read either on its own

or as part of a complete flow. Short introductions at the start of every chapter explain when that chapter is most relevant and what type of reader will benefit from it. While the guidebook provides a general framework that applies across Estonia, Latvia, Finland and Sweden, it is designed to be flexible – allowing you to adapt the methods and tools to your own landscape, stakeholders and institutional context.

Throughout this guidebook, you will find checklists, examples and suggested visuals that can help translate concepts into practical action. These elements are meant to support real situations in the field: conversations with landowners, meetings with authorities, internal planning discussions or coordination between organisations. You are encouraged to move freely through the guidebook, return to sections as needed and use it as both a learning resource and a day-to-day reference.

Above all, this guidebook is intended to support those who work closest to the land and to the people who manage it. Whether you are just getting started or already experienced, the material is built to give structure, confidence and clarity in navigating the many steps of catchment-based work.



PHOTO: KAREL KAISEL



1

Introduction

This chapter is relevant for all readers working with local water catchments. This guidebook is a practical resource for strengthening local water management and restoration efforts across the Baltic Sea region.

Purpose of the Guidebook

THE BALTCOP GUIDEBOOK is designed as a practical and accessible resource for anyone working with, or interested in, catchment-based coordination. Its main aim is to support practitioners working locally with hands-on implementation of catchment-based measures.

This guidebook brings together experiences, lessons learned, tools, and methods from across the Baltic Sea region. It is built to be modular, allowing readers to work through it step by step or use it as a practical reference manual whenever needed.

Why a Guidebook?

ACROSS THE BALTIC REGION, practitioners have expressed a clear need for accessible guidance, practical workflows, and concrete tools to support local implementation of catchment officer work. This guidebook addresses this need by combining hands-on instructions with clear explanations and adaptable methods suitable for different local contexts.

Who the Guidebook Is For

THIS GUIDEBOOK IS primarily geared towards you who work as a Catchment Officer – or in an equivalent role – planning, coordinating, and facilitating the implementation and restoration, or maintenance of water ecosystems on catchment level. It is designed as a hands-on manual to support practical, day-to-day restoration work on local landscape level.

However, this guidebook can also be relevant if you work with connected or supporting tasks, such as:

- Municipal and regional planning
- Watershed organisations and water councils
- NGOs working with water, wetlands, biodiversity or landscape management
- Landowners and farmers involved in local restoration efforts
- National authorities and agencies responsible for water management frameworks
- Researchers, consultants, or students focusing on applied water management

Authorities

- Navigate permits and regulations
- Clarify requirements
- Facilitate dialogue

Landowners

- Build trust and long-term relationships
- Identify opportunities
- Develop solutions together

Practical implementation

- Plan and coordinate
- Support contractors and delivery
- Ensure good outcomes

LOCAL CATCHMENT OFFICER

A trusted connector who helps turn ideas into action. Connecting people, knowledge and opportunities for:

Local needs & landscape

- Understand challenges and opportunities
- Use data and local knowledge
- Identify suitable measures

Follow-up & new opportunities

- Monitor and learn
- Maintain relationships
- Identify and develop new projects

Funding & expertise

- Find funding opportunities
- Connect the right people
- Bring in technical knowledge



How the Guidebook Is Structured

EACH CHAPTER INCLUDES guidance to help readers understand when its content is relevant to their role and context. The chapters also have short introductions intended to help readers understand if it is relevant to their work:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter 2 – The Role of a Catchment Officer

Chapter 3 – Where to Start Working with a Catchment Officer Approach

Chapter 4 – Step-by-step Approach: Best Practice for Local Catchment Officers

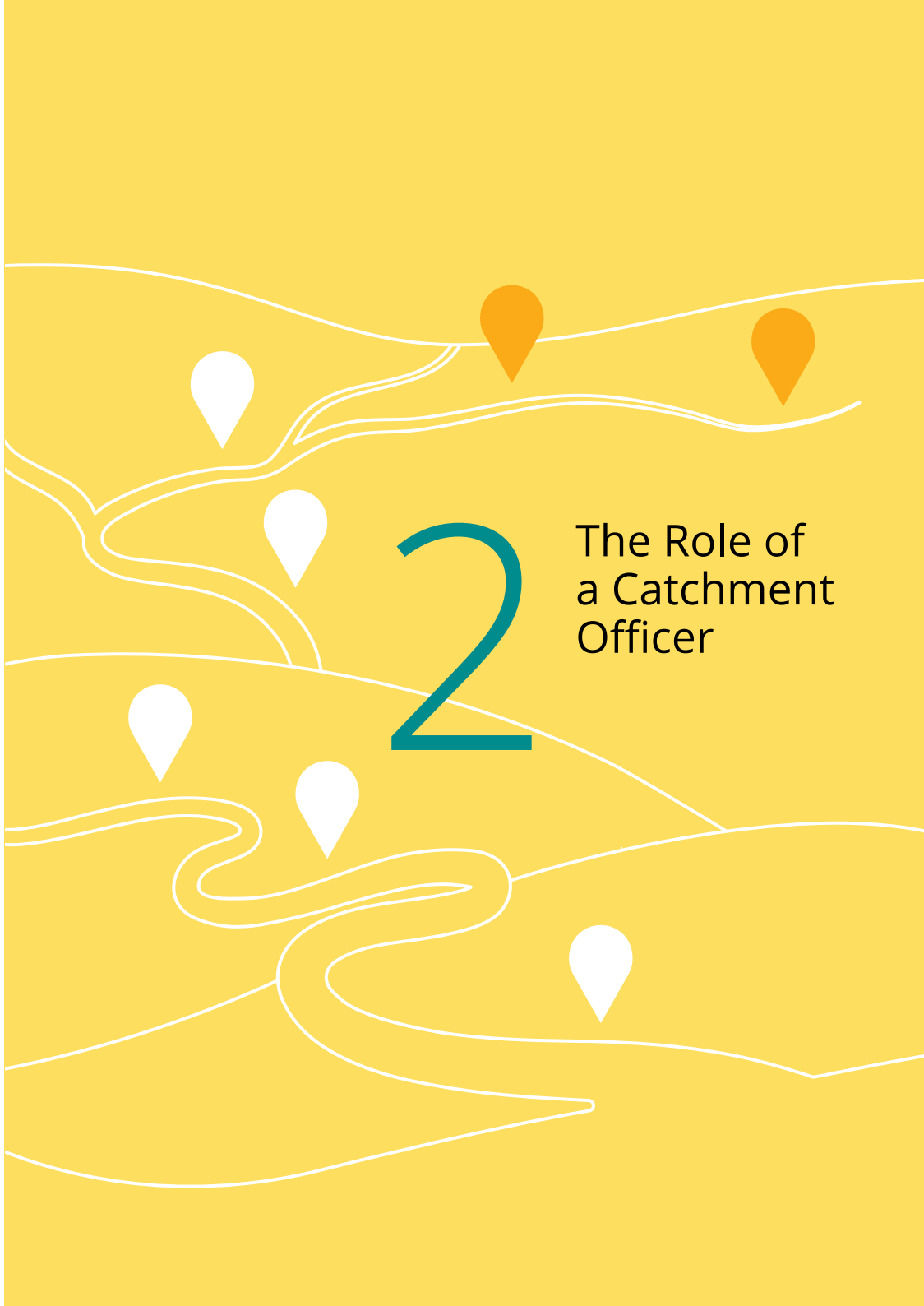
Chapter 5 – The Authority Dance: Navigating Administrative and Legal Processes

Chapter 6 – Starting, Funding and Scaling

Chapter 7 – General Conclusions and Way Forward

2

The Role of a Catchment Officer



This chapter introduces you to the Catchment Officer (CO) role and the broader catchment-based approach. Whether you are new to the role or want to explain it to colleagues, landowners, authorities or partners, this chapter gives you the basics. It also shows how different catchment roles and levels fit together, before moving on to getting started in Chapter 3 and practical workflows in Chapter 4.

2.1 Working with Catchments – Different Roles and Levels

CATCHMENT WORK takes place at different levels, depending on the scale of the landscape, the issues being addressed and how water management is organised. These levels overlap, and as a CO you may work across several of them or rely on colleagues and networks that connect your local work to the wider system.

How these functions are organised varies between countries and contexts. They may be covered by a single Catchment Officer working across several levels, or shared between different roles, such as Local CO, Catchment Coordinators, authorities or other supporting organisations. The titles and division of responsibilities may differ – what matters is that the functions are covered and connected across levels.

Local level

This is at the heart of the CO approach. Here, you work directly with landowners and local communities to understand needs and opportunities, build trust and turn ideas into practical action. Maintaining relationships and local knowledge over time helps identify suitable measures and support them from early ideas through to implementation and in follow up.

Larger catchment level

Some challenges and opportunities need to be understood beyond an individual site or sub-catchment. At this level, the focus is on seeing how local activities fit together: identifying shared priorities, coordinating initiatives and looking for opportunities to connect measures, actors and resources across the wider catchment.

Regional and national level

Local catchment work also needs to connect with the wider structures that shape water management – water is generally not subject to administrative borders. This can include regional and national authorities, River Basin Management Plans, strategies, policies and funding frameworks. Working at this level helps connect practical experience and local needs with broader priorities and opportunities.



2.2 The Catchment Officer

THE CATCHMENT OFFICER (CO) is at the heart of this guidebook. While other levels provide important support, practical work happens locally, within the catchment. A CO works directly with landowners and other local actors to identify opportunities, co-ordinate practical measures and help turn ideas into implementation. The role is intentionally broad and flexible. Depending on the local context, a catchment officer may:

- Identify and develop opportunities for restoration and improved water management together with landowners;
- Coordinate planning, funding and implementation of practical measures;
- Help navigate permits, administration and dialogue with authorities;
- Connect landowners with municipalities, authorities, technical expertise and other relevant actors;
- Support follow-up, communication and long-term management; and
- Provide a trusted and relatively neutral point of contact throughout the process.

This local presence can speed up implementation, reduce costs through coordination and build trust between landowners and other actors. By maintaining knowledge and relationships over time, COs can also connect projects and funding opportunities, identify synergies and help develop individual measures into more coordinated catchment-level action.

Importantly, CO is a function, not necessarily a formal title. Many people already perform parts of this role without calling themselves Catchment Officers. If you support locally driven water management, build relationships and help move ideas towards practical implementation, you may already be working as a CO.

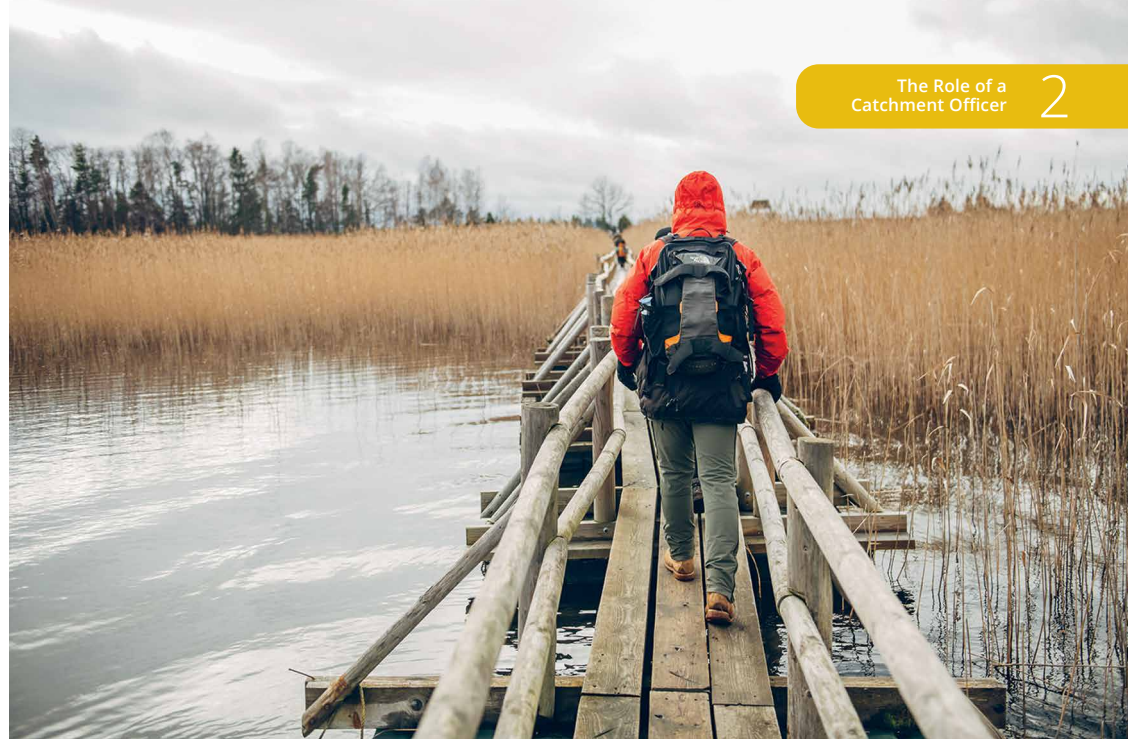


PHOTO: MAREKS BLŹMANIS

Neutrality can be an important tool for the CO role. You often work between landowners, authorities, municipalities and other actors with different interests and responsibilities. Your role is not to represent one side, but to help build understanding, connect perspectives and find workable ways forward. Being seen as a trusted and relatively neutral actor can be particularly important when landowners are hesitant or have limited trust in authorities.



WHAT WE CALL a catchment officer is a function and could be called a variety of different things locally for example, a water ranger, catchment co-ordinator etc. If you fill any of the functions above then you are a catchment officer.





2.3 The Catchment Approach

WORKING AT THE CATCHMENT scale means understanding water as part of a connected landscape. A catchment is the area where all water drains to a common point – and therefore provides a natural perspective for planning and implementing water management. This perspective helps ensure that the right measures are implemented in the right places, responding to local conditions and opportunities while contributing to wider environmental objectives and public benefits.

In this guidebook, restoration is used in a broad sense. It does not necessarily mean returning a site to a former historical state, but improving ecological and hydrological functions and reducing pollution, creating conditions for healthier, more resilient water systems. What restoration looks like in practice will therefore vary from place to place.

Key principles of the catchment approach include:

- **Holistic planning:** recognising interactions between land use, hydrology, biodiversity, and human activities.
- **Local engagement:** involving landowners, communities, and stakeholders from the beginning.
- **Evidence-based action:** using data, maps, and field observations to identify effective measures.
- **Adaptive implementation:** adjusting actions as new information and opportunities emerge.
- **Collaboration:** ensuring alignment between local actors and authorities.
- **Right measure, right place:** ensuring that measures respond to actual needs and local conditions, while contributing to wider environmental objectives and public benefits.



Where to Start Working with a Catchment Officer Approach

There is no single way to start working with a catchment approach. This chapter is intended for both new and experienced Catchment Officers (CO) who are preparing to begin work. There is no single way to get started: the best approach depends on the landscape, stakeholder dynamics, existing initiatives, available data, resources and timing.

THE CHAPTER INTRODUCES THREE different entry points that can be used individually, combined or adapted to your local situation. Whichever approach you choose, successful CO work relies on building trust, identifying opportunities together with landowners, using pilots and demonstration sites strategically, and staying flexible as circumstances change.

The approaches provide a starting point for the practical step-by-step workflow in Chapter 4, where ideas and opportunities are developed into concrete measures.

3.1 Different Entry Points – Finding Your Way In

STARTING CATCHMENT OFFICER WORK can look very different depending on local circumstances. Practitioners across the region consistently emphasise that there is no single correct way to begin. Instead, three common starting points can help you find momentum depending on what opportunities, challenges, and actors already exist in your area. Below, each starting point includes:

- A short explanation of what the starting point means
- How you can identify or activate this type of opportunity
- What the CO role typically involves at this stage



1. FINDING INTERESTED FARMERS AND LANDOWNERS

THIS STARTING POINT builds on existing motivation from landowners, local groups, municipalities, or other actors. It often creates early momentum because the initiative comes from people who are already motivated. Start from what matters to the landowner. The entry point does not always need to be water management itself. Soil health, productivity, drainage, flood risk or other landowner priorities may provide a more relevant starting point for discussing measures that also deliver water benefits.

- Talk to local landowners during events, meetings, field visits or community events.
- Ask municipalities if they have ongoing or upcoming projects where water issues play a role.
- Contact local associations (local farmers associations, fishing clubs, village groups, environmental NGOs).
- Review previous local initiatives – even small ones – that may hint at interest.
- Use informal networks: farm advisors, local contractors, or nature guides often know who is motivated.
- Identifying shared challenges and bringing people together around common goals.

**How to
identify or
activate
interest:**

**As a CO,
your role at
this stage
is to:**

- Listen carefully and clarify what the interested actors would like to achieve.
- Explore how their interests fit within catchment needs and legal frameworks.
- Help translate general interest into concrete next steps and possible measures.
- Support them in involving more stakeholders where needed.

This approach can be particularly effective when you want to build trust and show that the CO role is responsive to local needs rather than externally imposed. It also provides opportunities to identify local champions who can inspire others.



2. FOCUS ON CATCHMENTS WITH HIGH PRIORITY

A DATA-DRIVEN START uses maps, monitoring data, environmental indicators, or previous analyses to identify where improvements are most needed.

How to
identify or
activate a
data-driven
start:

- Review national and regional GIS portals for hydrology, soils, land use, wetlands, erosion risk, nutrient loads, and water quality.
- Look at recent monitoring reports or waterbody status assessments.
- Check municipal planning documents or environmental strategies.
- Use simple map overlays to identify hotspots or high-potential areas.
- Combine data with field visits to confirm conditions on the ground.

As a CO,
your role at
this stage
is to:

- Translate data into understandable maps and talking points.
- Use data to initiate conversations with stakeholders.
- Prioritise areas where measures can have the biggest impact.
- Avoid relying solely on data – balance it with local knowledge, monitoring data, or identified environmental issues (for example erosion hotspots, nutrient loads, hydrological bottlenecks, or habitat loss).

A data-driven starting point is useful when clear environmental priorities have already been identified, either through monitoring programmes, modelling, or previous studies. As an catchment officer, you might have access to national GIS portals, water quality data, wetland inventories, flood risk maps, or habitat maps.

The aim is not to “decide everything from the desk”, but to use data as a conversation starter and a way to target limited resources where they can make the biggest difference. Combining data with field visits and local experience is essential – it can act as hands-on support for decision making and support engagement by tracking trends and predict long term outcomes.



3. PROBLEM-DRIVEN STARTING POINT

A PROBLEM-DRIVEN START begins where a specific issue is already visible or urgent, such as flooding, drainage conflicts, erosion, habitat loss, or poor water quality.

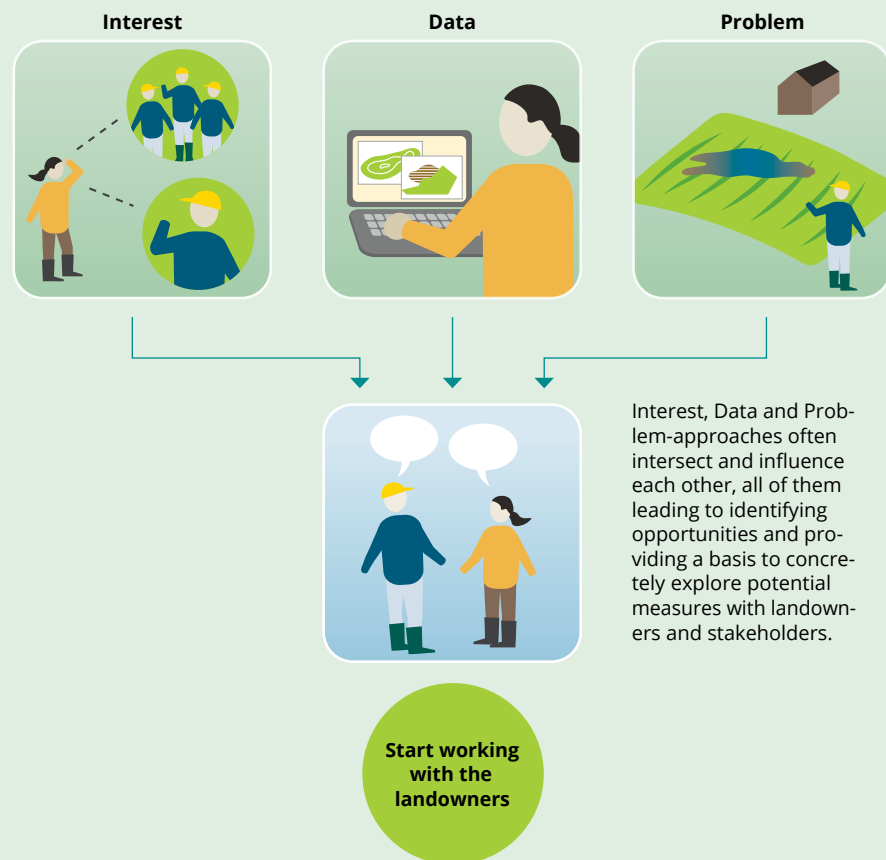
How to
identify or
activate a prob-
lem-driven
start:

- Listen for recurring complaints or issues raised by farmers, municipal staff, or residents.
- Check municipal emergency reports or climate adaptation documents.
- Look for “symptoms” in the landscape: erosion scars, ponded fields, degraded ditches.
- Review media articles or community discussions about water-related problems.
- Ask advisory services (agronomists, drainage engineers) what issues they encounter often.

A prob-
lem-driven
starting point
typically
involves:

- Clarifying how different actors experience the problem (impacts, costs, risks).
- Mapping which parts of the catchment contribute most to the issue.
- Identifying where small, realistic measures could help reduce the problem.
- Facilitating dialogue to move from blame or frustration towards shared solutions.

Here, the CO often plays a key role as a neutral facilitator, helping actors to recognise that they share an interest in reducing risks and improving conditions, even if they have different perspectives. Problem-driven work can be demanding, but it also creates strong incentives for collaboration when handled well.



Use peer examples:



LANDOWNERS MAY be more receptive when they can see measures already implemented by neighbours or other landowners they trust. Demonstration sites, field visits and landowner-to-landowner exchange can be powerful ways to build interest and confidence.



3.2 Examples from the BaltCOP Partners

ALTHOUGH FULL CASE stories are placed elsewhere, this chapter briefly highlights how different partners have applied CO or related roles.

I AM A
CATCHMENT
OFFICER!
CASE
STORY



Finding the right solution together

Linda Grinberga, Leading Researcher and Associate Professor at the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LBTU)

LINDA IS A LEADING researcher at the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LBTU), focusing on wetlands and water management. Through BaltCOP, LBTU collaborates with Pasaules Dabas Fonds (PDF), a Latvian nature conservation organisation, to develop and apply the Catchment Officer approach in Latvia. Her involvement in the project has given her practical experience of this role, working with landowners and other local stakeholders to turn restoration opportunities into action.

"Through BaltCOP and my wider work with constructed wetlands and nature-based solutions, I've learned that people want a clean and healthy environment around them, but don't always know which options are available or best suited to their land. My role is to work with each landowner to understand what matters most – their needs and priorities, the conditions of the site and the relevant regulatory requirements – and use these to find a water management solution that works for them and meets those requirements."

I AM A
CATCHMENT
OFFICER!
CASE
STORY



Preparation creates
opportunities

Erika Adolfson, Water Advisor, Nyköpingsåarnas Vattenvårdsförbund (NVVF)

ERIKA WORKS as a Catchment Officer at Nyköpingsåarnas Vattenvårdsförbund (NVVF), a regional water conservation association in Sweden. With a background in agronomy, agricultural advisory work and teaching, she combines science, maps and field observations with the knowledge and ideas of the people who know the landscape best.

"For me, the work is a bit like solving a puzzle: understanding how water, land use and people fit together, and finding solutions that work for both nature and the people who live and work there."

PHOTO: NYKÖPINGSÅARNAS VATTENVÅRDSFÖRBUND

I AM A
CATCHMENT
OFFICER!
CASE
STORY



Starting where
people are ready

Kateriina Rumvolt, Catchment Coordinator, Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF), Estonia

KATERIINA WORKS with the Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF), a nature conservation organisation working to protect biodiversity and restore ecosystems across Estonia. Within BaltCOP, she is piloting the role and responsibilities of a Catchment Coordinator, bringing the approach into the Estonian context. She works closely with landowners and other stakeholders to identify and develop opportunities for restoring water bodies and hydrological regimes.

"My role is to coordinate the implementation of restoration measures and foster dialogue between landowners and other stakeholders to ensure the best possible outcomes for water restoration. I've learned that finding the right site also means finding people who are ready to act. Sometimes, local engagement can be just as important as finding a technically perfect location."

PHOTO: ESTONIAN FUND FOR NATURE

4 Step-by-Step Approach: Best Practice for Local Catchment Officers

This chapter provides a practical, structured workflow for your day-to-day work as a Catchment Officer (CO). The steps are not strictly linear – catchment work is dynamic, and you will often move back and forth between them depending on context, timing and stakeholder input. Use the workflow as a guide rather than a fixed process.

KEEP IN MIND THAT you are not expected to carry out every step yourself. Catchment Officers often bring in consultants or other expertise for specific parts of the process, such as GIS analysis, technical design or detailed drawings. Your role may therefore be as much about coordinating the right people and expertise as carrying out the work directly.

Follow the 8-step approach to wetland restoration



Each step includes:

Purpose – what the step contributes to/why it matters

How to get started – practical actions to initiate the step

Expected outputs – what you should aim to achieve

Tips, pitfalls, and examples – to support practical implementation

This chapter can be used during planning, in the field, or as a checklist for ensuring that key elements of the CO workflow are covered.



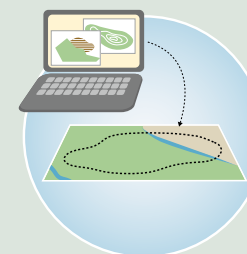
- 1 Landowner discussions**
Talking to the landowner or farmer.



- 2 Identifying a location**
Checking for possible locations for restoration with the landowner.



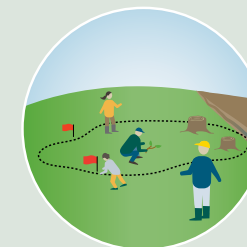
- 3 Analysing the area**
Mapping the area digitally and analysing the data.



- 4 Mapping the restoration measure**
Designing the wetland and making adjustments if needed.



- 5 Obtaining permits**
Applying for necessary permits from local or regional authorities.



- 6 Preparing for restoration**
Preparing for digging by clearing trees and bushes, and putting markers in the ground.



- 7 Executing the planned restoration**
Digging the wetland with the help of an excavator.



- 8 Restored wetland**
The wetland is finished, but needs to be regularly maintained.

Step 1 – Initial Discussions with Landowners



This step is about:

To build trust, understand local needs, and identify both current and potential challenges and opportunities. These first conversations create the foundation for all later steps. They help you as a CO understand how the land is used, what matters to the landowner, what problems exist today, and what solutions might be possible. These first conversations often reveal unexpected opportunities – unused land, drainage issues, wildlife interests, or personal motivations – that can shape later steps and inform the planning and execution.

This step is often one of the most challenging. It may take time to find the right people, create interest, and raise awareness of what a CO does. Scepticism or resistance towards wetlands or restoration measures is common, making trust and patience essential.

Meet landowners on site where possible, listen to their priorities and avoid starting with predetermined solutions or focusing on blame. Be clear about your role and, where participation is voluntary, make this clear from the beginning. Building trust is easier when landowners understand that you are there to support the process rather than inspect, enforce or push a predetermined solution. Consistent and open communication helps build trust over time and creates a better basis for discussing possible solutions.

Checklist to get started



- ☐ **Understand** the local context: key actors, relationships, ongoing issues and potential conflicts
- ☐ **Map** existing networks and entry points (e.g. advisors, municipalities, local associations, existing meetings)
- ☐ **Prepare** simple maps, background material and relevant local information
- ☐ **Initiate** contact through suitable channels (advisor networks, municipality, direct outreach or events)
- ☐ **Join or organise** meetings, field walks or local events to meet landowners informally
- ☐ **Discuss** current issues, land use practices and interests
- ☐ **Check** that landowner interest aligns with actual needs, site conditions and wider environmental objectives – interest alone does not justify a measure.
- ☐ **Note opportunities**, constraints and motivations
- ☐ **Plan and schedule** follow-up meetings with interested landowners (transition to Step 2)

By the end of this step



You should have a first understanding of the landowner's interests and the opportunities for working together, including:

- **Notes on interests, constraints and opportunities;**
- **Potential sites to explore further;**
- **A record of the initial contact.**

Tips



BE PATIENT – trust-building takes time and often requires repeated contact



USE VISUAL material actively to support dialogue, not just as background



LISTEN MORE than you talk, refrain from being biased – focus on understanding motivations, not promoting solutions too early



PHOTO: JOHAN HAMMAR



PHOTOS: EMMA GEMAL

Building trust with landowners can take time but is essential for all later steps. Meet landowners on site where possible to help you understand local needs and identify challenges and opportunities.

I AM A
CATCHMENT
OFFICER!
CASE
STORY



PHOTO: MAGDA JENTGENA

Building on what already works

Magda Jentgena, Head of the Baltic Sea and Freshwater Programme at Pasaules Dabas Fonds (PDF)

MAGDA WORKS IN the BaltCOP project together with the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LBTU), testing and developing the Catchment Officer approach in Latvia.

At Mežacirulī farm, a wetland was built in 2014 to reduce nutrient runoff, including a constructed wetland system to treat polluted stormwater from the farm. Through dialogue between the farmer and experts, and with funding from BaltCOP, the wetland system has been further developed to improve nutrient retention.

Building on more than a decade of experience, PDF and LBTU are testing new solutions, including filter materi-

als designed to capture phosphorus, nature-based solutions in a vegetated ditch, and methods to strengthen water circularity and biodiversity within the wetland system.

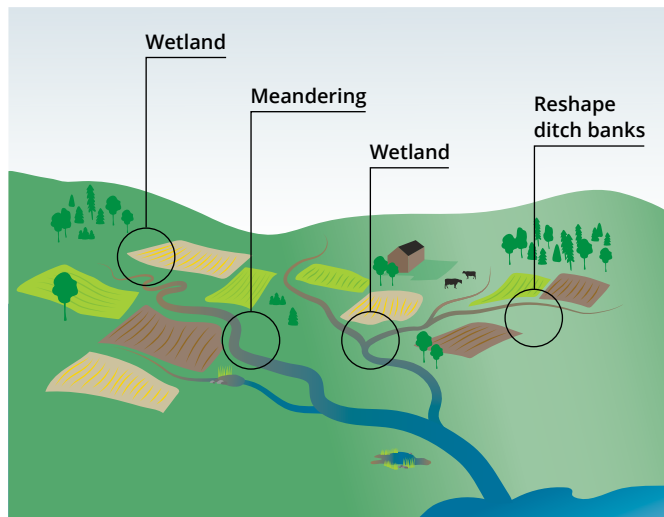
"The Mežacirulī pilot shows how an existing wetland can be developed further rather than continuing business as usual or starting from scratch in a new location. By combining the farmer's practical experience with research and new solutions, we can test how wetlands can retain nutrients more effectively, increase biodiversity and make better use of water as a resource."

Step 2 – Identifying Potential Locations



This step is about:

Here, the focus is on exploring the land together with the landowner and identifying where practical measures could realistically be placed. The purpose is to understand how water moves through the landscape, where natural opportunities exist, and where challenges such as poor drainage, erosion, or blocked structures might be addressed. Field visits often reveal details that maps cannot – soil moisture gradients, subtle depressions, historical land use traces, or unused areas that could host restoration measures. At this stage, the goal is to identify *possibilities*, not to finalise any design.



Checklist to get started

- ☐ **Bring** a map or aerial photo showing key features (drainage lines, topography, field boundaries)
- ☐ **Walk** the site together with the landowner and observe how water moves (flows, wet spots, pooling)
- ☐ **Identify** potential locations (depressions, marginal land, erosion areas, drainage problems)
- ☐ **Check** existing structures (ditches, pipes, outlets) and note constraints
- ☐ **Discuss** land use, machinery access and seasonal conditions
- ☐ **Document** key locations with photos, notes and map markings
- ☐ **Summarise** together before leaving: what areas are most promising to explore further?



By the end of this step:

You should have a first overview of where action could be relevant, including:

- **Shortlist of 1–5 candidate locations**
- **Initial notes on constraints and opportunities**
- **Simple sketches or annotated maps**

Use plans and data to guide, not replace, fieldwork:



MAPS, MODELS AND CATCHMENT PLANS can help you identify where to look, but potential measures still need to be verified on site and discussed with the landowner. Local conditions may look very different on the ground.

Tips



FOCUS ON opportunities and long-term benefits before detailed analysis.



PRIORITISE locations suggested by the landowner.



HIGHLIGHT funding opportunities and local interest in collaboration.

Step 3 – Analysing the Area



What this step is about:

This step brings together field observations, available information and the landowner's knowledge to build a shared understanding of the site and identify realistic opportunities for action. The goal is to understand hydrology, constraints and risks well enough to assess what locations and measures could be suitable. This includes looking at flow paths, seasonal variation, topography, soil conditions, drainage structures and environmental values.

The analysis does not need to be perfect – it needs to be useful. It should give you as a CO and landowner enough clarity to narrow down options and proceed.

Tips



DO NOT AIM for a perfect analysis – focus on what is needed to move forward



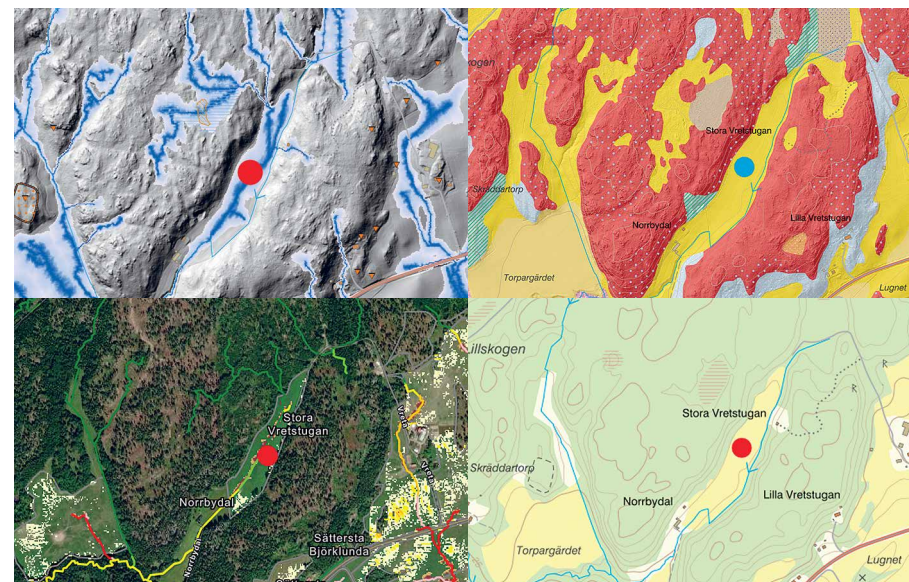
COMBINE DATA with local knowledge – neither is sufficient on its own



KEEP VISUALS simple and functional – they should support dialogue, not analysis



STAY FLEXIBLE – revise your understanding as new information emerges



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Checklist to get started

- ☐ **Gather** maps, aerial photos, notes from Step 2, and landowner input.
- ☐ **Review** GIS data such as elevation, soil, hydrology, land cover, and water quality.
- ☐ **If GIS is not available**, use printed maps or online tools to identify slopes, flow paths, wet areas and infrastructure
- ☐ **Review** existing information from municipal plans, national portals and previous reports
- ☐ **Identify** hydrological flow paths (inflow, outflow and catchment boundaries)
- ☐ **Note** constraints and risks (e.g. drainage systems, utilities, cultural heritage, flood risk, steep slopes, biodiversity loss and conflicts of interest)
- ☐ **Conduct** a follow-up field visit if needed to verify unclear features
- ☐ **Create a simple** “opportunities & constraints” overview and use it to discuss next steps with the landowner

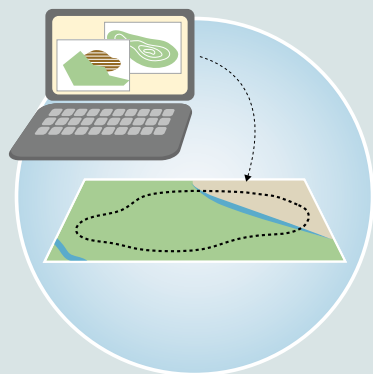


By the end of this step

You and the landowner should have identified one or more realistic locations and measures, understand why they are suitable,

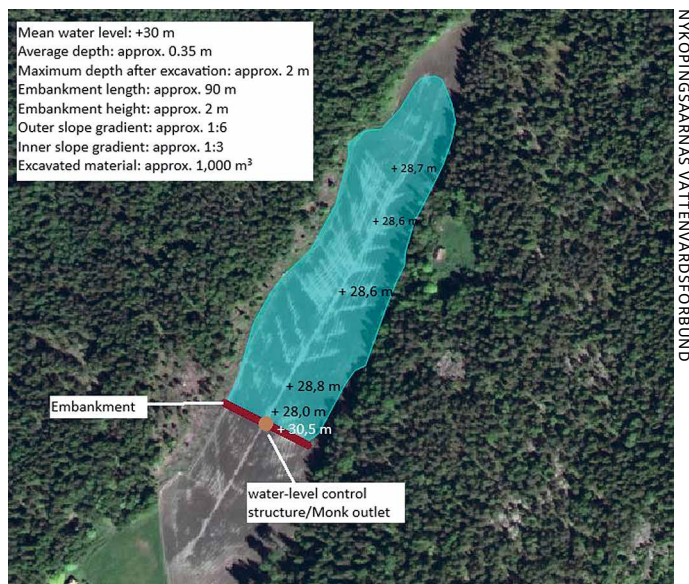
and agree on whether to move forward. If you do, the selected idea moves into the drafting and design phase.

Step 4 – Drafting and Designing the Measure



What this step is about:

Once you and the landowner have agreed on a location and suitable measure, the next step is to turn the idea into a tangible concept. Outline the basic design, including its footprint, shape, expected water levels, inflow and outflow points, and potential benefits. The design should be clear enough to discuss and develop together, but flexible enough to adjust as you learn more. The aim is to reach a shared vision before moving into permitting and other administrative steps.



Checklist to get started

- ☐ **Create** a simple sketch of the proposed measure, using GIS, hand drawings, or annotated aerial or even satellite photos.
- ☐ **Identify** what is required to carry out the plan: approximate budget, indicative timeline, technical considerations, and any uncertainties that need attention later.
- ☐ **Discuss** the draft with the landowner and any other relevant stakeholders such as municipal staff, advisors or neighbours.
- ☐ **Check** alignment with landowner routines such as machinery access, cropping and grazing.
- ☐ **Prepare** a rough budget and timeline
- ☐ **If needed**, revise and adjust the sketch, footprint or design details to better fit the landowner's needs, local conditions and practical constraints.
- ☐ **Agree together** on which concept version should move forward to Step 5.



By the end of this step:

You and the landowner should have a shared concept and be ready to decide whether to move forward, including:

- **A concept design map or sketch**
- **Preliminary cost estimate**
- **Draft timeline for permitting and implementation**
- **Notes on alternatives or constraints**
- **Clear approval from the landowner to move forward**

Tips



KEEP the design simple – avoid over-engineering at this stage



ANCHOR the concept in the landowner's reality – practical use often matters more than technical optimisation



MAKE UNCERTAINTIES explicit – it is better to note them than to resolve everything now



BE OPEN to iteration – the first version is rarely the final one.

Step 5 – Permits and Administrative Requirements



What this step is about:

Once you have a concept design, the next step is to prepare for the permits, notifications or other approvals needed to move forward. The process can vary depending on the type, scale and location of the measure – from simple notifications to more complex permitting procedures. Requirements also vary between countries, but authorities need clear information about what is proposed, how it will function and what it may affect.

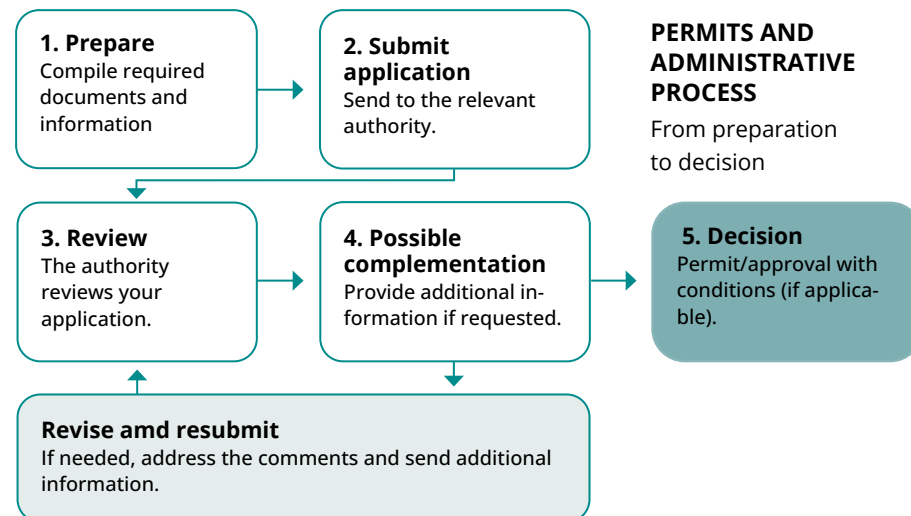
As a CO, you help the landowner understand the process, identify what is required and prepare clear and accessible documentation without unnecessary detail. Keep the process as simple as possible for the landowner to maintain their engagement. If requirements are unclear, contact the relevant authority early and treat them as a partner in finding the way forward, rather than only as a reviewer.

Keep in mind that administrative processes can take several months, so start early and allow enough time in your planning. Chapter 5, The Authority Dance, takes you through the process in more detail, including country-specific procedures and guidance.

Permitting logic

Permitting is about providing authorities with enough information to assess whether a proposed measure delivers environmental benefits without causing unacceptable impacts. Typical requirements include:

- Description of the measure
- Maps and site information
- Expected environmental effects
- Technical drawings (where relevant)
- Landownership information
- A well-prepared application usually saves time later



PERMITS AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS

From preparation to decision

Checklist to get started

- ☐ **Check** early for site-specific restrictions such as protected areas, cultural heritage, utilities, drainage systems, or neighbouring properties.
- ☐ **Identify** relevant permits, notifications and other requirements – for example related to water operations, drainage, protected areas or species, cultural heritage, construction or land-use restrictions – and clarify which authorities are responsible.
- ☐ **Support** the landowner in submitting the application or notification
- ☐ **Clarify** the process: required documents, key information and expected timelines
- ☐ **Prepare** application material (drawings, descriptions and supporting information based on Step 3)
- ☐ **Initiate** early dialogue with the authority to clarify expectations and reduce uncertainty
- ☐ **Track** deadlines, requested supplements and ongoing communication

Expected outputs

You should have identified and submitted the required permits or notifications and know what to expect from the process ahead. Depending on the procedure, approval may still take time before implementation can begin.

Step 6 – Preparing for Implementation



What this step is about:

Once the necessary permits and approvals are in place, your focus shifts from administration to preparing for implementation. Your role as a CO is to help turn the agreed concept into a practical plan for how the work will be carried out on the ground.

Together with the landowner and contractors, you refine technical details, confirm dimensions and access routes, plan logistics and schedule the work around seasonal conditions. You also prepare for monitoring, documentation and communication during implementation. The aim is to make sure everyone involved understands what will happen, when and how. Good preparation at this stage can save time and costs and prevent misunderstandings once work begins.



Checklist to get started

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Confirm the final design together with the landowner and adjust details if needed | ☐ Visit the site together with the contractor to ensure shared understanding |
| ☐ Prepare clear drawings and descriptions for the contractor | ☐ Clarify timing, risks and sensitive periods (e.g. soil conditions, breeding season) |
| ☐ Identify and engage a suitable contractor; clarify scope, roles and cost estimates | ☐ Establish a simple monitoring and documentation routine during construction |
| ☐ Plan logistics, access routes and handling of materials | |



Expected outputs

You should have a clear implementation plan agreed with the landowner and contractor, including a timeline, practical arrangements, and a plan for monitoring and documentation. Everyone involved should know their role and be ready for implementation to begin.

Tips



BE AS CONCRETE as possible – clarity now prevents confusion later



SEEK ADVICE from experienced colleagues or experts when needed, and keep landowners



informed and involved throughout the process.

ALIGN expectations early – misunderstandings at this stage are costly to fix later



PLAN FOR variability – site conditions and timing rarely behave exactly as expected



MAINTAIN continuous communication to quickly resolve issues during implementation

Step 7 – Executing the Planned Restoration Measure



What this step is about:

This is where the measure is implemented on the ground. Your role as a CO is to follow the work, support the contractor and maintain good communication with the landowner, helping ensure that the measure is implemented safely and as close to the agreed design as practical conditions allow.

Be prepared to adapt. Conditions on site may differ from what you expected: weather, water levels, soft soils, machinery limitations or unexpected findings can all affect the work. Help assess alternatives, coordinate decisions and document any changes. If someone else designed the measure, make sure they are available to answer questions when needed.

Unexpected issues are part of implementation. Your job is not to eliminate uncertainty, but to manage it. Keep a level head, involve the right people and focus on finding workable solutions without losing sight of the purpose of the measure.



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Checklist to get started

- ☐ **Review** the implementation plan together and align expectations, including the need for flexibility
- ☐ **Be present** on-site during critical stages to ensure alignment with the design
- ☐ **Document** progress regularly (notes, photos, sketches), including any deviations and reasons
- ☐ **Monitor** conditions (weather, water levels, soil moisture and environmental sensitivities)
- ☐ **Communicate** openly with the contractor and landowner, and agree on adjustments when needed
- ☐ **Treat** the first years as a learning phase – observe, adapt and adjust expectations over time
- ☐ **Encourage** the landowner to share observations and insights – they provide continuous local knowledge
- ☐ **Use** follow-up strategically – revisit the site when it reveals new information (e.g. after extreme events)
- ☐ **Consider** the site as a potential demonstration – with consent, it can inspire others and support scaling
- ☐ **Stay** flexible and pragmatic – adapt the design to real site conditions when necessary

Tips



DO NOT PANIC when something unexpected happens – pause, assess the options and solve issues step by step



USE ADJUSTMENTS as an opportunity to build trust through transparency and professionalism



FOCUS ON decision quality, not on following the original plan at all costs



KEEP DOCUMENTATION useful and proportionate – record what matters for follow-up, learning and accountability



Expected outputs

The measure should be completed and any changes or remaining issues clearly documented. You should have:

- **A site diary recording progress, key decisions and adjustments;**
- **As-built documentation showing the final dimensions and structures; and**
- **A list of any remaining corrections or follow-up actions.**



PHOTOS: NYKÖPINGSÅARNAS VATTENVÅRDSFÖRBUND



PHOTOS: NYKÖPINGSÅARNAS VATTENVÅRDSFÖRBUND



Now you are ready to implement on the ground. Be prepared to adapt as conditions on site may differ from what you expect. For example, heavy machinery can sometimes get stuck in wet conditions and requires extra resources to extract.



Step 8 – Operation and Management over Time



What this step is about

Once construction is complete, your role shifts towards supporting the long-term function of the measure. Stay in contact with the landowner, make sure they know what to expect as the site develops, and clarify any future maintenance needs. Follow up can help you see how the measure develops over time and identify any need for adjustments or maintenance.

Lessons and documented results should be fed back into future measures. They can also strengthen new funding applications and projects by providing concrete examples of what has worked and what can be built on.

Tips



FOCUS ON long-term partnership – sustained engagement matters more than control



TREAT THE FIRST years as a learning phase – you learn over time



ENCOURAGE the landowner to share observations and insights – they provide continuous local knowledge



USE FOLLOW-UP strategically – revisit the site when it reveals new information (e.g. after extreme events)



CONSIDER the site as a potential demonstration – with consent, it can inspire others and support scaling



A wetland is born, before and after pictures of a constructed wetland. Top photo: September 2024, middle photo: October 2024, bottom photo: July 2025.



PHOTOS: NYKÖPINGSÅARNAS VATTENVÅRDSFÖRBUND



By the end of this step

You and the landowner should have a shared plan for long-term maintenance and follow-up, including what needs to be done, when to check the site and how you will stay in contact. Initial observations and lessons learned should be documented and carried forward into future measures and projects.

Checklist to get started

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Visit the site together with the landowner after completion | ☐ Identify potential long-term needs (e.g. vegetation management, sediment build-up) |
| ☐ Discuss expected seasonal changes and long-term development | ☐ Link the site to relevant monitoring programmes if applicable |
| ☐ Provide simple guidance on long-term maintenance and when to act | ☐ Document lessons learned and discuss future opportunities |
| ☐ Agree on a light follow-up routine (visits, calls or shared photos) | |

CASE STUDY
FOLLOW-UP

The project does not end when construction is finished

Linda Grinberga, Researcher at the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LBTU)

FOLLOW-UP IS not only about making sure a measure works. Staying involved can build knowledge, maintain relationships and create opportunities for future restoration.

"For me, completing a wetland is not really the end of the project. We keep monitoring, learn from how the site develops and stay in touch with the landowner. Sometimes the most valuable result comes later – when neighbours see the wetland for themselves and start asking what could be done on their land."

CASE STUDY
FOLLOW-UP

Small measures can create bigger change

Kateriina Rumvolt, Catchment Coordinator, Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF), Estonia

IN ESTONIA, eight landowners have been actively engaged through BaltCOP. Some who were initially hesitant have changed their perspective after seeing tangible results on the ground, while the first restoration measures have also generated interest beyond the landowners directly involved in the project. This growing interest is creating new opportunities to work with both additional landowners and larger stakeholders.

"I've seen how visible results from small measures can create opportunities for much broader collaboration. When people see that something works, it becomes easier to engage new landowners and larger stakeholders who can help fund and scale up similar measures. What starts with one landowner can eventually create opportunities across a much wider landscape."

5

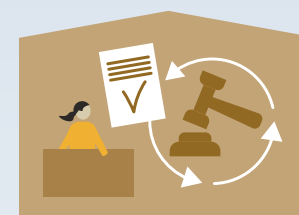
The Authority Dance: Navigating Administrative and Legal Processes

Turning an idea for a water restoration measure into reality often means navigating permits, regulations and administrative processes across local, catchment and regional levels. As a Catchment Officer (CO), you will often find yourself in the middle of this “authority dance” – helping landowners understand what is required, connecting different actors, aligning expectations and keeping the process moving.

You do not need to have all the answers yourself. Your role is to help make a complex process more manageable by maintaining communication, preparing clear information and guiding the landowner along the way. This chapter takes you through the typical administrative pathway, how it connects to the practical workflow in Chapter 4, and how you can avoid common obstacles without losing the landowner’s engagement along the way.

5.1 Different Governance Levels in the Authority Dance

ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS differ between countries, but restoration projects typically involve several interconnected levels. As a CO, your main role is at the local level, working directly with landowners and other actors in the catchment. However, turning ideas into action also requires understanding how this local work connects to wider coordination and formal administrative processes.



NATIONAL / EU
Policy, legislation and funding
e.g. EU directives, national strategies, funding, programmes, ministries

Function of a Catchment Officer

Frameworks and resources
Laws, policies and funding create opportunities and set the framework for local action.

Navigating formal processes

Permits, notifications and other formal processes bring the project into contact with relevant authorities. Here, you can support the landowner by helping clarify requirements, facilitate communication and provide the information needed to move the project forward.



REGIONAL
Permits, planning and coordination
e.g. regional authorities, river basin management, regional plans

Catchment Officer Works mainly at local level and connects across levels

Coordinating interests

Some measures need to be understood or coordinated beyond the individual site, for example when several landowners, municipalities or interests are involved. Your role is to connect the local project to this wider catchment context when needed.



LOCAL
Where measures are implemented
e.g. landowners, municipalities, local actors, practical implementation

Local experiences and needs
Results and lessons inform planning, policy development and future funding.

Building local relationships and developing ideas

This is where most of your work as a CO takes place. You work directly with landowners and other local actors to build trust, identify needs and opportunities, and develop feasible measures. A strong local foundation makes the later administrative process much easier.

5.2 The Administrative Pathway Across These Levels

THE ADMINISTRATIVE process is not separate from the practical workflow described in Chapter 4. The two develop alongside each other – and good timing between them can save both time and unnecessary work.

AS YOU CAN SEE, The authority dance is rarely a straight line. Start early, keep talking and do not be afraid to ask for guidance. Your role is not to know everything, but to connect people and help the landowner navigate the process.

1. Explore, analyse and involve early

Corresponds to chapter 4, Steps 1–3

AS YOU DEVELOP the idea with the landowner, identify relevant authorities, permits and requirements. It may not always be clear who to contact or what is required, and different actors may have different priorities or interpretations. Do not be afraid to contact the authorities early. Ask questions, clarify roles and use the dialogue to understand the way forward before too much work has been done.



2. Design, apply and adapt

Corresponds to chapter 4, Steps 4–6

AS THE MEASURE takes shape, prepare clear and complete information for permits or notifications. Expect some back and forth: authorities may request clarifications, requirements may affect the design and processing can take time. Keep the landowner informed, clarify uncertainties with the authority rather than trying to solve everything yourself, and allow enough time for the process.



3. Implement, comply and follow up

Corresponds to chapter 4, Steps 7–8

THE KEY IS TO treat authority dialogue as part of the project from the beginning, rather than as a separate step once the design is finished. Once approval is in place, make sure any conditions are reflected in implementation. Unexpected issues or conflicting interests may still arise, so keep the landowner, contractor and authorities connected and address changes together. After completion, some requirements may continue through monitoring, maintenance or reporting – the administrative “after-party”.



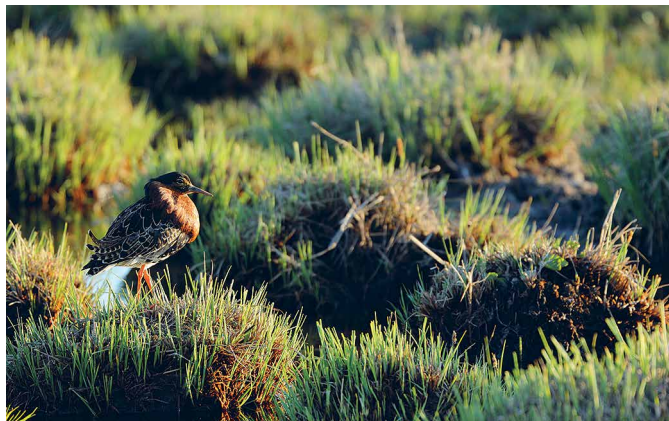


PHOTO: KAAREL KAISEL

Tips



EARLY DIALOGUE with authorities reduces surprises and clarifies what will be needed later.



CLEAR DRAWINGS and short explanations are usually more effective than detailed reports.



LANDOWNERS, municipalities and authorities speak different “administrative languages” – the CO can bridge these perspectives.



PERMITS can take time. Friendly, periodic check-ins with the authorities help keep the process moving.



NATURAL prerequisites such as breeding seasons, high water or

frozen soil may affect both permitting and implementation.



OTHER CO:S, municipal staff or advisors may know shortcuts, typical questions or local expectations – do not hesitate to ask questions and communicate.



EMAILS, notes and sketches help prevent misunderstandings and make it easier to respond to authority requests.



ADMINISTRATIVE processes can be slow. Flexibility and calm help landowners stay confident and engaged – but do not miss the deadlines.

6 Starting, Funding and Scaling

Catchment Officer (CO) work often starts small: with a first project, a funding opportunity or simply an idea that needs resources to move forward. For a new CO, finding and securing that first funding can be an important part of getting started and building experience.

YOUR ROLE IS NOT ONLY to find and apply for funding, but also to help make funding accessible to landowners. Sometimes relatively small barriers prevent landowners from taking advantage of available opportunities, and helping overcome these can be just as important as securing the funding itself.

Over time, individual projects can build knowledge, relationships, and capacity for the next. As activities grow, so does the need for coordination, continuity and more stable funding. This chapter looks at how you can start small, combine funding opportunities and build from individual projects towards long-term capacity for catchment work.

Catchment Officer work is most effective when it is continuous, well-resourced and embedded in long-term structures. While many initiatives begin as projects, lasting impact requires stable funding, institutional support, and coordination across levels.

6.1 What is Scaling and Why Is It Important?

SCALING CATCHMENT OFFICER work is not only about reaching more areas – it is about building coordination capacity that lasts beyond individual projects. In practice, scaling means:

- Maintaining continuity over time
- Reaching more landowners and sub-catchments
- Building institutional memory and expertise
- Increasing efficiency through shared structures
- Strengthening trust and visibility of the role

Without continuity, knowledge is lost, relationships must be rebuilt, and successful approaches remain fragmented.

This perspective also changes how funding should be approached. Instead of asking “Which grant can finance this pro-

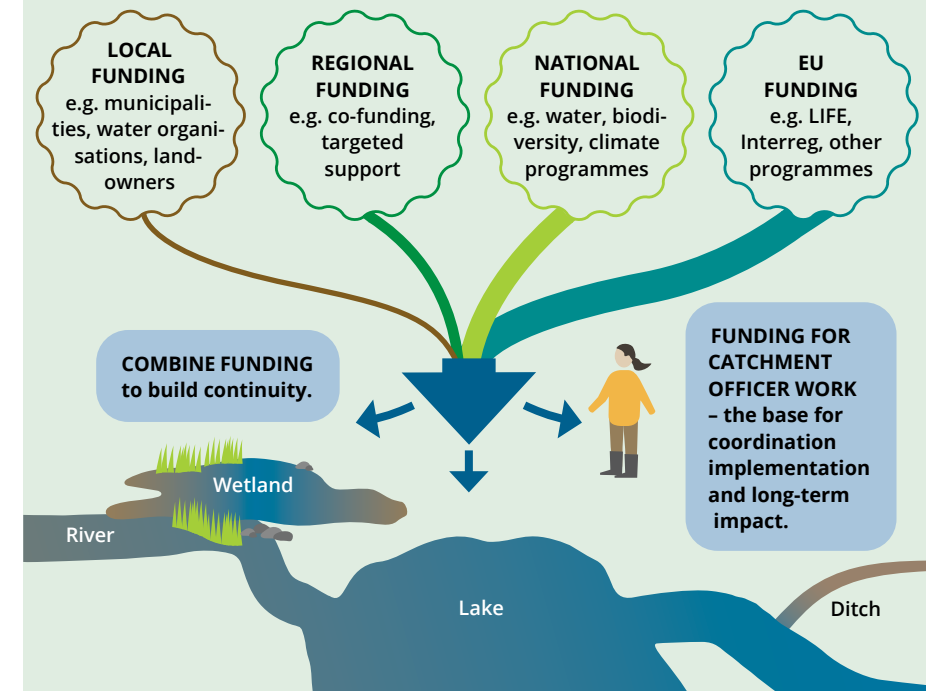
ject?”, the more strategic question becomes “How can different funding sources be combined to support continuous coordination over time?”. The next section introduces common funding models through this long-term lens.

6.2 Common Funding Models

LONG-TERM COORDINATION is rarely funded from a single source. Most successful setups combine funding across governance levels:

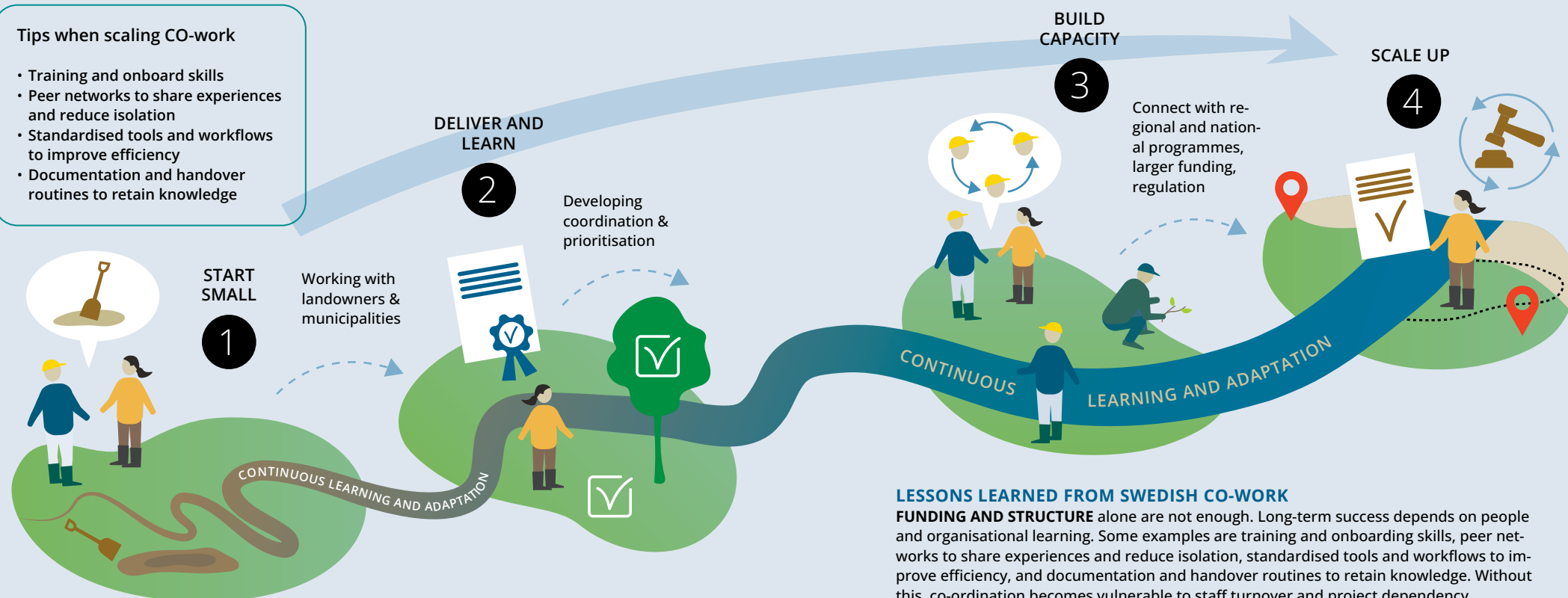
YOU DO NOT NEED ONE FUNDING SOURCE THAT COVERS EVERYTHING

LOOK FOR WAYS to combine opportunities over time. One source may fund a specific measure, another coordination or monitoring, and another long-term capacity. Combining sources can make catchment work more stable and flexible.



Tips when scaling CO-work

- Training and onboard skills
- Peer networks to share experiences and reduce isolation
- Standardised tools and workflows to improve efficiency
- Documentation and handover routines to retain knowledge



LESSONS LEARNED FROM SWEDISH CO-WORK

FUNDING AND STRUCTURE alone are not enough. Long-term success depends on people and organisational learning. Some examples are training and onboarding skills, peer networks to share experiences and reduce isolation, standardised tools and workflows to improve efficiency, and documentation and handover routines to retain knowledge. Without this, co-ordination becomes vulnerable to staff turnover and project dependency.

6.3 Practical Tips for Building Long-Term Capacity

DO NOT WAIT UNTIL a project is ending to think about what comes next. Discuss continuation early, explore funding sources and consider where coordination capacity and function could be anchored long-term. Invest in people and skills alongside individual projects so that knowledge and capacity remain when projects ends.

Build partnerships across levels

Stay connected with municipalities, water organisations, authorities and other relevant actors beyond individual projects. Share

plans and opportunities early, and look for areas where funding, activities, or expertise can be combined. Nurturing relationships make it much easier to develop larger initiatives when opportunities arise.

Document and communicate what works

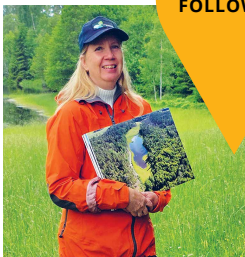
Keep track of results, lessons learned and examples that show the value of the work. Use these when talking to funders, decision-makers, landowners, and potential partners. Share successful projects and involve engaged landowners as ambassadors – seeing what has worked for someone else can be a powerful way to inspire action.

Be ready when opportunities arise

Keep an eye on upcoming funding programmes, policy changes and planning cycles, such as EU funding periods, water management plans or new climate and restoration initiatives. You do not need a finished project proposal, but having ideas, potential sites, partnerships and evidence ready makes it much easier to act when a suitable opportunity appears.

Remember the cost of administration.

Funding that requires extensive administration may leave less time for landowner engagement and fieldwork. When comparing funding opportunities, consider not only the amount available but also the capacity required to manage it.

**CASE STUDY
FOLLOW-UP****Starting small
and building
capacity**

**Erika Adolfson, Water Advisor, Nyköpings-
åarnas Vattenvårdsförbund (NVVF)**

NYKÖPINGSÅARNAS Vattenvårdsförbund (NVVF) originally focused mainly on water monitoring, with most work carried out by consultants. The move towards practical water management started small: one employee, a few restoration projects and funding through programmes such as the national funding schemes LOVA and LONA.

Over time, each project added experience, relationships and new opportunities. Small projects led to larger initiatives, including LIFE and INTERREG, while the organisation gradually developed its own capacity for catchment-based work.

"The lesson is simple: start with what you have and build from there. Small projects can create the experience, relationships and capacity needed to take on something bigger."

7

General Conclusions and Way Forward

This final chapter brings together key lessons from developing this Guidebook and from practical experience across the Baltic region. Catchment-based restoration happens through people – landowners, local organisations, municipalities, water councils and authorities – and the Catchment Officer helps connect them and turn plans into action.

For decision-makers and organisations looking to build long-term capacity, the key lesson is to treat catchment coordination as long-term infrastructure. With sustained funding, capacity building, and shared tools, local action can become faster, more coordinated, and more sustainable.

7.1 Key Takeaways from Developing This Guidebook

ACROSS COUNTRIES and organisational contexts, several shared observations stand out:

First, **local coordination capacity** is often the main limiting factor – not the lack of ideas, not the lack of potential measures, and not necessarily the lack of funding in absolute terms. Progress is most often slowed down by gaps in coordination, unclear responsibilities, administrative friction, or the time required to build trust and maintain stakeholder engagement.

Second, Catchment Officer work is most effective when treated as a long lasting activity and local function, not a project. Relationships, local knowledge and implementation momentum accumulate over time – and are costly to rebuild if coordination stops.

Third, practitioners consistently highlight the value of hands-on tools and clear workflows. **Structured step-by-step processes**, checklists, and simple visual materials are critical for moving from early interest to implementation, especially when working across different actor groups.

Finally, the process of developing this Guidebook itself demonstrates the importance of peer exchange and shared language. Many challenges are common across borders, and ca-



“The path to restoration and putting measures in can sometimes meander its way to completion like a river, where some steps flow easily while others can experience either flooding or drought making the process take longer – or require full focus to get through the rapids.” – John Lund, Water Strategist, Nyköpingsåarnas Vattenvårdsförbund (NVVF).

capacity grows faster when methods, templates, and experiences are shared rather than reinvented locally. At the same time, it constitutes a big challenge to avoid working in silos and develop resources jointly across countries, regions, and organisations.

7.2 Looking Ahead

THE LONG-TERM POTENTIAL for catchment-based coordination is strong. It can contribute simultaneously to water quality, flood management, biodiversity, climate adaptation, water and landscape resilience, while growing interest in nature-based solutions is creating new opportunities for funding and implementation.

There is also potential to strengthen the structures around local catchment work. Clearer and more recognised local roles can make it easier for people and organisations to take on CO

PHOTO: NYKÖPINGSÅARNAS VATTENVÅRDSFÖRBUND

functions, while stronger networks across municipalities and catchments can help move from isolated measures towards more coordinated action at landscape scale.

Realising this potential, however, requires addressing some persistent challenges. Catchment coordination is still often dependent on short-term project funding, making it difficult to maintain relationships, knowledge, and capacity over time. Permitting and administration can slow implementation, while the broad skill set required of COs creates a need for better training, onboarding and peer support. Responsibilities between local, catchment and regional levels can also be unclear, creating uncertainty around who should coordinate, act and provide funding.

The opportunity going forward is therefore not simply to implement more measures, but to build the long-term capacity, relationships and structures that allow local action to continue and grow over time.

7.3 The Need for National Coordination Points or Support Structures

One recurring insight is the need for stable national or regional support functions that strengthen CO work and reduce duplication across projects and organisations. Depending on the country context, such a coordination point could:

- Provide training and onboarding support
- Maintain updated templates and guidance material
- Support peer networks and exchange
- Clarify typical permitting pathways and administrative expectations
- Provide an overview of funding opportunities and strategic timing
- Act as a “helpdesk” or competence centre for local coordinators

This does not necessarily require a new large institution. In many contexts, it could be built by strengthening an existing authority, national programme, water organisation or partnership platform.

7.4 Training, Professionalisation and Peer Networks

Long-term success depends on supporting Catchment Officers as a professional community. This includes:

- Structured onboarding for new coordinators
- Peer learning opportunities and regular exchange formats
- Shared toolkits and templates that reduce reinventing work
- Guidance on stakeholder facilitation and conflict-sensitive communication
- Basic technical training to support early assessments and dialogue

Over time, this strengthens confidence, improves quality, and makes implementation more predictable for both landowners and authorities.

PHOTO: NYKÖPINGSÅARNAS VATTENVÄRDSFÖRBUND





The Future of the Catchment Officer Guidebook – Guidebook Version 2.0 and Keeping the Material Alive

TO REMAIN USEFUL OVER TIME, the Guidebook should be treated as a living resource that is improved and adapted over time. A future, further developed guidebook could possibly also include:

- Updated country-specific permitting and funding information
- Expanded visual materials and field-based examples from countries around the Baltic Sea
- Refined templates, checklists and process maps based on feedback from users of the Guidebook
- Modular add-ons (e.g., technical wetland design basics, monitoring approaches, communication tools)
- A simple and robust mechanism for updating the Guidebook (e.g., yearly revision cycle, shared digital repository, or governance via a coordination point)

A practical approach is to maintain a small “update log” documenting what has changed and when, so users can trust that guidance is up to date.



Do you have any thoughts or feedback to improve this guidebook? Scan the QR code below.



THE GUIDEBOOK would benefit by future long-term ownership on both a Baltic wide and national level. If you have any questions, comments or feedback on specific sections of this guidebook please use the QR code above and fill out the form.