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Renaturation of the militarized hydrosystems of the Pays de Bitche

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► **To cite this version:**

Denis Mathis, Emmanuel Chiffre, Anne Mathis. Renaturation of the militarized hydrosystems of the Pays de Bitche. International Symposium of LabEx DRIIHM 2024, Jun 2024, Montpellier, France. , 2024, 10.34972/driihm-f1b5bd . hal-04622323

HAL Id: hal-04622323

<https://hal.science/hal-04622323>

Submitted on 24 Jun 2024

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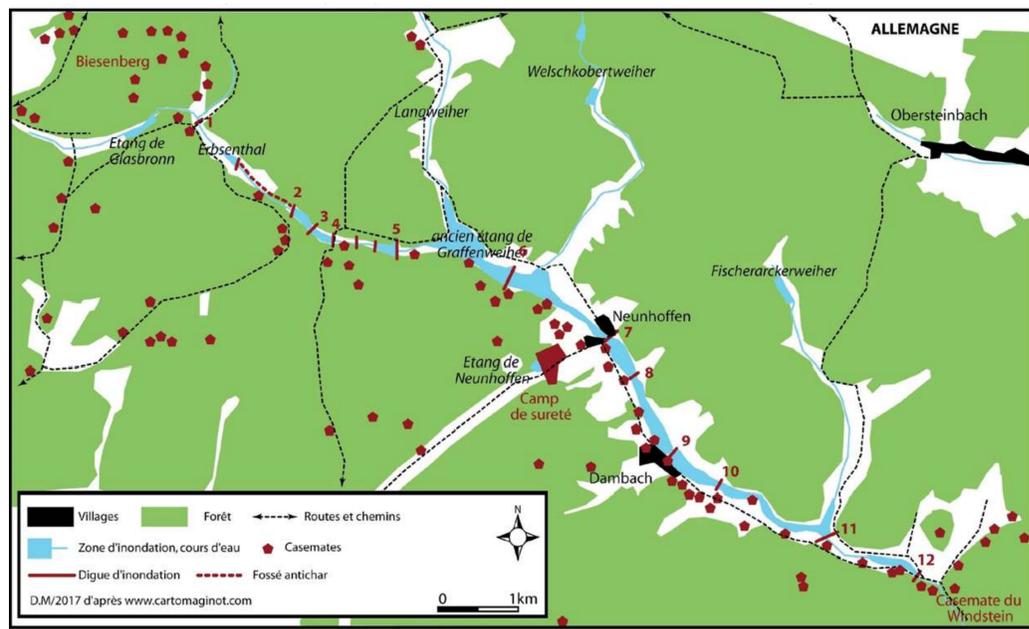
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The remains of a flood defense system



During the 1930's and the construction of the Maginot Line, the water resources of the ponds in the Rothenbach and Schwarzbach valleys were mobilized to create a water cut by flooding the valley. A system of gates and thresholds structured the flood zone and was intended prevent flooding.



A fossilized landscape of war



After the fighting of 1945, the Rothenbach valley was abandoned. The ruins of the Erbenthal estate (farms, castle) were erased by the heirs. Agricultural land has been reforested with conifers. The military remains have been partially neutralized. However the cleaning of the battlefield is incomplete. Flood thresholds (1), bunkers (2), mine devices (3) and barbed wire (4) are still in place.

A protected, renatured, heavily militarized valley



Naturalization: Remobilization of natural (geosites) and anthropogenic (old ponds, wet valley bottoms) forms within the Pays de Bitche Rocks and Peatlands Reserve.

Artificialisation: to restore a more «natural» profile to the watercourses and limitate sediment migration from upstream to downstream, initial efforts were made to renaturize the rivers.

Artialisation: the Chapelle des Bois was rebuilt after the war. It is at the same time a geographical landmark, a cultural place which hosts «readings» in summer and a destination for hikers.

The split course of the Rothenbach has given way to a flooded wetland which adjoins the old anti-tank ditch. This wetland, like the old pond bottoms, presents remarkable ecological interest.



Conception-réalisation: Denis Mathis
Crédits photographiques: Anne et Denis Mathis
Cartographie: Denis Mathis

