

FOREWORDS

Lakes are often classified by size, volume, surface area, trophic level and other characteristics but, despite their importance in influencing the speed of limnological processes, residence times are rarely considered. For this reason, and to acknowledge the major impact of this parameter on the features and functions of a lake, an international Conference was organised in Bolsena (Latium, Italy) titled "Residence Times in Lakes: Science, Management, Education" from 29 September to 3 October 2002, on the occasion of the Year of the Latium Volcanic Lakes.

This event was made possible thanks to the contribution of the Environment Committees of Latium Regional Council and Viterbo Provincial Council, with sponsorship from the Town Council of Bolsena, the University of Tuscia, the Italian Association of Oceanography and Limnology (AIOL), the International Lake Environmental Committee (ILEC) and the Rotary Club of Viterbo and was organised jointly by the CNR Istituto Italiano di Idrobiologia, Viterbo Provincial Council, Lake Bolsena Association, the promoter, and the University of Tuscia.

The Conference highlighted the importance of the impact of residence time on hydrological, chemical, biological and physical aspects, focusing particularly on the implications for water quality protection and management. Environmental education and how to promote citizen participation in the right kind of shared management of water resources were also discussed, and the Conference included a special session on volcanic lakes. The theme chosen reflects the fact that the area of Central Italy within a radius of 100 kilometres from Rome contains eight little-studied volcanic lakes which have an extremely slow renewal time. The Conference was a major stimulus to the activation of detailed research on renewal time and its impact on water quality.

More than 150 participants from 36 different countries attended the conference, presenting and discussing their experiences relating to topics such as: 1) comparative limnology of lakes with different residence time regimes, 2) the need for an integrated approach to the management of lakes and their watersheds in the light of their residence time.

The papers given also highlighted the importance of involving local people, and schools in particular, in water management activities; the Conference was in fact followed by an intensive public awareness campaign, with the support of the Environment Committee of Viterbo Provincial Council, which recently obtained EMAS (Environmental Management and Audit Scheme) registration from the European Union.

The present publication is a collection of a few papers presented at the Conference.

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