

Sustainable Land Use in European Protected Areas

IUCN Regional Office for Europe

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Relevant internet addresses

Websites on the profiled protected areas and their projects:

www.sigov.si/tnp/naslovna.htm
www.bsi.fr/pnc
www.cevennes-ecotourisme.com
www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk
www.pfaelzerwald.de
www.parcscatalunya.net/garrotxa.htm
www.eryri-npa.co.uk
www.arhipelaag.ee/vainameri/enindex.php
www.retezat.ro

Introduction

The need to develop and implement sustainable forms of land use has become a topic of increasing attention at local, national and international levels over the past years, culminating with the adoption of the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines on the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity at the 7th Conference of the Parties to the CBD in Kuala Lumpur in February 2004. In the context of the CBD, sustainable use involves “the use of components of biological diversity in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity, thereby maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations.” (Article 2, CBD).

In Europe, sustainable use is a topic of special relevance for protected areas, a large proportion of which are lived-in, working landscapes that have been shaped by the harmonious interaction of man and nature over centuries. Maintaining this delicate balance is often fundamental to protecting their biodiversity and the special characteristics of their landscape. Even those protected areas whose primary focus is on the strict protection of “natural” core areas will often have peripheral zones or buffer areas, in which local populations still use the land and its resources.

Besides their tasks of nature and landscape conservation, protected areas increasingly have an obligation towards local communities and to maintaining their well-being. In rural areas where traditional, extensive forms of land-use have become less viable, and where depopulation and land abandonment threaten to change both the fabric of society and the nature of the landscape, there is a particular imperative to explore new opportunities for supporting local livelihoods. Contributing to sustainable regional development has become part of protected areas’ mission.

However, sustainability cannot be achieved in the short term. In many cases it will first be necessary to reduce the impact of unsustainable activities, in order to then move towards more sustainable patterns of activity. Protected landscapes have often been referred to as “test beds of sustainability”, in which innovative projects and sustainable approaches to land use can be piloted and, where successful, used as models for other regions.

The present publication presents a series of short case studies demonstrating how selected European protected areas are responding to the sustainability challenge in three key fields:

- Agriculture, as one of the most important types of land use in protected areas which are working landscapes;
- Forestry, as a second major type of land use in such areas; and
- Tourism, as a growing sector which presents both opportunities and threats to all types of protected area, and a form of “use” which increasingly requires active management by protected area authorities.

Although the case studies are divided into the above three fields, various common themes run through them. Achieving sustainability means encouraging a shared sense of responsibility and stewardship for the environment amongst a wide range of actors and stakeholders. Each needs to play his or her own particular part to help protect the area’s resources and maintain the local quality of life. To this end, working partnerships must be created – between protected area authorities and local people, businesses, farming communities, forestry authorities, local government... A number of the case studies demonstrate further that achieving true sustainability means taking a holistic approach to a region and developing links between the different sectors of activity which keep it alive, be it agriculture and tourism, forestry and recreation, tourism and local crafts, etc.

There are no “perfect examples” of sustainable land use in protected areas. Only time will reveal the relative success of any particular initiative. However, there are many exemplary approaches which might serve as models for other regions. The following cases are but a small selection. They show sustainable use contributing to the maintenance of biodiversity, of habitats and characteristic landscapes, and to the protection of local livelihoods. This publication is an opportunity to share that experience.

Case studies

1. Ecological Agriculture

1.1 Snowdonia National Park, Wales – Whole Farm Stewardship Schemes

IUCN Protected Area Category: V

Year of Establishment: 1951

Size of Protected Area: 217,000 ha.

Snowdonia National Park extends from the sea up to the highest mountain of England and Wales, Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon). The area is characterised by geological features from the Ice Age, with numerous U-shaped valleys and mountain lakes shaped by glaciers. The park is home to 26,000 people who live and work within and around its boundaries. Tourism and agriculture are the main industries that contribute to the economy of the area.

Management of the National Park

The National Park Authority is an independent authority which reports to the Welsh Assembly Government. The Authority consists of 18 appointed members - a mix of local councillors and members appointed by the Welsh Assembly Government - and day-to-day park management is executed for the Authority by the national park staff.

Besides the key purposes of conservation, enhancement of natural beauty, and the promotion of education and recreation opportunities, the park is committed to fostering the economic, social and cultural well-being of its local communities.

The National Park Management Plan, revised by the Park Authority at five-year intervals, sets out a vision for the park and is a guide for the Park Authority. The process of preparing the plan with wide consultation is as important as the final plan itself. Residents and interested parties have regular opportunities to attend Authority meetings and monthly planning “surgeries”.

Farm Stewardship

One of the park’s management aims is to encourage environmentally sensitive farming practices and the resurgence of traditional skills. Some 1200 hill and mountain sheep farms, occupying 80% of the land area, are located in the park. Farming here is heavily reliant on support packages from the EU, yet despite this support, the viability of agriculture continues to decline.

Recent initiatives implemented by the National Park Authority to help maintain the rural landscape and meet farmers’ needs include a four-year programme entitled “Rhaglen Rheoli Tir Eryri”. This uses financial incentives to encourage farmers to restore landscape features such as stone walls and traditional buildings and to protect special habitats such as moorland and native woodland in partnership with the Countryside Council for Wales.

However, the most significant achievements have perhaps been made with the development of broader, whole farm stewardship schemes under the Welsh “Tir Cymer” and “Tir Gofal” schemes.

The “Tir Cymer” scheme (in English, a “tidy land”) was introduced in 1992 in the southern area of the park, one of three areas in Wales selected to pilot this new approach to farming. The objective of the scheme was to combine good farming practice with the conservation of

habitats and wildlife, landscape conservation and the protection of archaeological features, while promoting opportunities for the public to enjoy the countryside.

The scheme involved farmers entering 10 year, voluntary “Whole Farm Agreements”, under which they were supported financially for changing farming practices and carrying out positive environmental works on their land. In return the farmers committed themselves to follow a conservation code for the whole farm. This obliged them, for example, to safeguard individual trees, areas of scrub, ponds, streams and other wetland features, to safeguard archaeological or geological sites on their farms, to keep traditional farm buildings in good repair and the farm clear of rubbish. The agreements regulated the use of fertilisers and pesticides, ensured the establishment of grazing regimes compatible with moorland conservation, and required farmers to agree changes to landscape features, infrastructure or farming systems in advance with their Tir Cymen officer. Furthermore, the farmers agreed to provide public access to un-enclosed upland areas.

Following the success of this five-year pilot programme, the scheme was superseded by the “Tir Gofal” (“cared for countryside”) agri-environmental scheme which operates across the whole of Wales. The scheme is administered by the Countryside Council for Wales and its partners – including the Snowdonia National Park Authority –and receives part funding from the European Union.

Benefits for conservation and stakeholders

Through the above schemes, the biodiversity and landscape value of the park have been significantly enhanced and environmentally damaging farming practices reduced. Work with local farmers has improved relationships between the Park Authority and the farming community, and helped raise awareness of both the aims of the park and environmentally sensitive farming practices.

For the farming community, tangible benefits have been felt through enhanced farm incomes and financial security. Job opportunities have been created both on the farms and in the wider community, as extra spending by the farmers creates additional local employment and the demand for new services. Locals and visitors to the area are also benefiting from new legal rights to walk over an additional 27,000 ha. of land.

To date, Tir Cymen and Tir Gofal agreements cover approximately 50% of the eligible land within the park. This involves some 455 agreements at an annual cost of £ 5,447,000 (capital and management) covering some 80,857 ha. The increasing interest in this type of scheme and high number of applications from farmers bear testimony to the strength of the approach.

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1.2 Retezat National Park – Towards Sustainable Grazing and Pasture Management

IUCN Protected Area Category: II National Park

Year of Establishment: 1935

Size of Protected Area: Originally 10,000 ha, gradually extended to its current 38,047 ha.

The Retezat National Park, located in the west of Romania, is the country’s oldest national park. It protects a unique corner of the Carpathian mountains, with deep valleys in the lower

altitudes and high glacial plateaus with over 80 glacier lakes in the higher areas. A large area of pristine mixed and coniferous forest covers the lower levels of the protected area. The park has a rich vegetation and is home to viable populations of various large mammals, including brown bears, wolves, lynx, wildcat, roe and red deer, as well as a number of small carnivore species. In 1979 the universal value of the park was recognised through its designation as a biosphere reserve under UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Programme.

Management of the National Park

The current National Park Administration was established in 1999 as a sub-unit of the National Forest Administration. This is one of the first models for a park management system to be established in Romania, as part of the GEF-supported "Romanian Biodiversity Conservation Management Project (BCMP)". The establishment of the Administration followed a period of rapid changes in land ownership and the use of resources in the park, which heightened the need to ensure conservation of ecosystems and landscapes through coordinated management.

From the beginning it was understood that the new management system of the park could only be effective with the participation and involvement of local people. Two supporting management bodies – the Scientific Council and Consultative Council – bring together a range of key stakeholders for on-going consultation and supervision of park management activities. Furthermore, the legal framework governing the park determines that all management activities must be discussed with local stakeholders and consensus achieved on key management decisions.

Since its establishment, the Park Administration has organised meetings with local communities and authorities to raise awareness of the purpose of the national park, and gain local input for park planning. These have formed part of the process towards development of the park's new Management Plan, which was completed and approved by the Ministry of Environment in June 2003.

Grazing and Pasture Management

Traditional grazing is still practiced by local people in the park. More than 20% of the alpine areas are pastures owned and used by local villages as grazing areas for livestock. The villagers' rights to these pastures date back to a governmental agreement of 1922. However, the local authorities managing them had little consideration for the biodiversity values of the alpine pastures. As grazing activities rapidly increased after 1990, lack of control enabled animal owners from other, more distant communes to bring in increasing numbers of animals, particularly sheep, which led to considerable overgrazing. As this has been demonstrated to alter significantly the natural diversity and richness of the alpine pastures, over-grazing had become one of the main threats within the park.

Nevertheless, the aim was to maintain traditional grazing activity on the park's alpine pastures, but within the ecological capacity of the mountain areas. The challenge for the Park Management Authority has been to encourage local people to work towards sustainable use of the mountains' natural resources, and to reduce the damaging levels of grazing.

Progress to date

Various steps have been taken over the last few years towards achieving this goal. Firstly, as part of the Park Administration's efforts to raise awareness of the role and functions of the park, it organised meetings with local animal owners to increase understanding of the consequences of overgrazing of the mountain pastures.

Within the frame of the BCMP project it has been possible to develop a Small Grants Programme for projects which help decrease grazing pressure on the alpine pastures whilst promoting sustainable grazing and/or other activities on lands around the villages. A Grants Committee has been established which includes representatives from all the communities with ownership rights or another stake in the park, and an operational manual developed for deciding on applications for these funds. Furthermore, training is provided to local people to enhance their capacities for project writing and fund-raising activities.

Meetings with local animal owners led to the negotiation, in 2001, of grazing contracts regarding the use of most of the alpine pastures inside the central zone of the national park. At the level of the local authorities, efforts to collaborate on this issue have resulted in the development of protocols and joint programmes which establish rules for grazing activities and protect the grazing rights for local animal owners. As a result, the level of grazing activities was successfully decreased in 2002 and 2003 to the carrying capacity – or indeed less than the carrying capacity - of the alpine meadows, even though the severe drought of 2003 forced local people to use the alpine meadows more intensively to compensate for the poor resources of lower areas.

Benefits for conservation and stakeholders

The development of sustainable grazing patterns in the Retezat National Park is contributing to biodiversity conservation aims in the park, particularly with regard to the alpine pastures. Following on from the above actions, a complex study on the alpine areas of the park has been started. This is investigating biodiversity, carrying capacity and land-use patterns, in order to recommend further management measures and build on the results achieved to date.

The Park Administration has come to recognise the value of retaining local skills and traditional features of land-use in the region. Through its activities to maintain these, it is building trust and cooperation with local stakeholders, which in turn should enhance levels of support for the national park and its aims.

For their part, by working *with* the national park on these issues, local stakeholders are securing opportunities to continue their traditional activities in the area, as well as to diversify their activities. Support from the national park in the form of training and small project grants is leading to new opportunities, and helping local people to gain confidence in developing their own initiatives.

Looking ahead

It has been demonstrated with the above measures that success can only be achieved through continuous development of educational activities and participatory processes with local people. Community programmes in Retezat have significantly raised awareness of the need for sustainable use of agricultural land. However, the Park Administration still has much work ahead to raise the level of local commitment for biodiversity conservation in the park. It is recognised that participative activities must be further developed if successful management is to be achieved in a Park where land ownership and land-use rights are so complex.

Constraints for the future include the poor economic situation of the local communities which own the pastures, and the fact that the park currently has no possibilities to offer financial compensation for reduced grazing activity.

Nevertheless, it can be concluded that the park has succeeded in setting up exemplary models of participatory management and is using these effectively to address a key threat to

biodiversity, overgrazing. As a relatively young organisation, the Park Administration is at the start of a long process whose progress will need to be monitored in the coming years.

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1.3 West Estonian Archipelago Biosphere Reserve, Estonia – Farm Diversification and Marketing of Local Farm Products

IUCN Protected Area Category: V

Year of Establishment: 1990

Size of Protected Area: 1,560,000 ha., of which 400,000 ha. terrestrial

The West Estonian Archipelago Biosphere Reserve is situated in the eastern Baltic Sea and comprises the islands of Saaremaa, Hiiumaa, Vormsi and Muhu, as well as numerous islets and marine areas. It is a recognised biosphere reserve under the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme. The terrestrial habitats of the biosphere reserve include pine forests, mixed spruce and deciduous forests, juniper and coastal meadows, swamps and peat bogs. The reserve also includes a number of “Ramsar” designated wetlands. The biosphere reserve has some 50,000 inhabitants. Key land-uses include extensive agriculture, fishing, forestry, hunting and tourism. The main aims of the biosphere reserve are to maintain the insular and coastal landscapes as well as the cultural and socio-economic features of the area.

Management of the Biosphere Reserve

The reserve was originally managed by three administration units under the Ministry of the Environment, each of which had a regional Biosphere Reserve Centre. This structure reflects the spatial isolation and historic development of the different communities. In 2001/2002 this set-up was changed in favour of a non-governmental management structure, and the NGO “Biosphere Programme Foundation” created for this purpose.

Since Estonian independence, the biosphere reserve has been affected by typical problems of the countries in transition, including falls in agricultural production, and land reform processes which have led to smaller farms with weaker economies. Furthermore, it became necessary to move away from “top-down” management approaches to more participatory styles of management. In response to these changes, the biosphere reserve started to focus less on pure nature conservation, and increasingly on becoming a model region for sustainable development. This has required a more integrated approach, to balance conservation goals with economic and social needs of the people living on the islands.

New Approaches to Traditional Farming and Farm Products

As varied authorities, institutions and other partner organisations started to work together towards achieving sustainable development in the West Estonian Archipelago, a number of initiatives were set in motion to maintain extensive, ecologically sound farming and increase the economic benefits from local farm produce.

On Hiiumaa Island for example, the biosphere reserve and the County Government have worked together to support initiatives relating to the marketing of local farm produce:

- From 1995, the Hiiumaa Farmers Union started to develop a product quality label for Hiiumaa goods produced according to ecological farming practices.

- The Emmaste Municipality in the south-west of the island started to promote the direct marketing of local products to its inhabitants, opening a Farm Shop in 1998 and creating an open-air market for local produce as a model initiative for other municipalities to follow.

One particular project has been making a considerable impact in terms of farm diversification and integrated rural development, namely the “Väinameri project”, which is run by a large network of partners in Estonia and Sweden including WWF Sweden, the Research Centre Archipelaag (a member of the “Biosphere Programme Foundation”), the Swedish Aid Agency SIDA and the Estonian government.

Farm diversification for integrated rural development

The Väinameri project seeks to contribute to the restoration and maintenance of the biodiversity and scenic qualities of coastal landscapes using both native and quality-breed animals and specific patterns of grazing. Furthermore, it is helping to create economic opportunities for people working in agriculture in sparsely populated areas of the biosphere reserve, not only through income from high quality meat but also from a more diverse range of related local products and farm services.

The project has three main components:

- Management of naturally unfertilised grasslands to maintain the biological value of these areas
- Local handicraft production using basic materials obtained through the sustainable management of natural resources
- The development of small-scale farm tourism which adds to the earning potential of local inhabitants.

As part of the support provided, farmers have been assisted in purchasing pedigree stock and provided with maintenance equipment.

Educational elements of the project include demonstration pastures which illustrate the environmental benefits of this form of grazing on site, and simple outdoor auditoria which provide information about the scheme for farmers, conservationists, school groups and tourists. Lookouts, boardwalks and nature trails facilitate field observation.

Benefits for the consumer and for conservation

By purchasing “natural grazing meat” customers not only pay for a good quality product but also for the conservation of the coastal agricultural landscape. Awareness for the value of this product is being raised by events such as a “Green meat dinner” in 2002 at an exclusive restaurant, cooked by famous Estonian chefs. 60 guests including nature conservationists, farmers, merchants, representatives of government authorities and journalists were able to sample the high-quality beef grazed within the project. Such activities are helping to make the connection between the production of high-quality meat in valuable natural areas and the conscious consuming of this.

In terms of local tourism development, the visitor to the region benefits from unique activities which are different to those provided on typical tourist farms, and from the successful coordination of activities which ensures that a full range of services can be provided. By making use of these services and purchasing the local products on offer, such as honey, herbs and handicrafts, the visitors too are making an active contribution to maintenance of the landscape and to the livelihoods of local people.

The capacity building and logistic support provided to farmers, craftsmen and tourist entrepreneurs within this project has proven crucial to achieving conservation objectives.

Overall, the project is demonstrating that targeted agri-environmental subsidies can be a powerful force to improve biodiversity, enhance landscape character, and is proving an effective means of demonstrating sustainable development in this biosphere reserve.

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2. Sustainable Forestry Management

2.1 Pfälzerwald Nature Park, Germany – Model Concepts for Forest Management

IUCN Protected Area Category: V

Year of Establishment: 1959

Size of Protected Area: c. 180,000 ha.

The Pfälzerwald and its French neighbour, the “Vosges du Nord” Nature Park, together form one of the largest uninterrupted forest areas in central Europe. They have been recognised as biosphere reserves under the UNESCO Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme both individually and, in 1998, jointly as Europe’s first “transfrontier biosphere reserve”. The landscape of this central European region is characterised by a mixture of evergreen and deciduous forest, vineyards, meadows, numerous streams and ponds and red sandstone rocks. The area has a relatively low population and traditional activities have declined, whilst its significance as a recreation area for people from the surrounding economic centres has continued to rise in recent years.

Management of the Nature Park

Since 1982, management of the nature park has been in the hands of the “Pfälzerwald Nature Park Registered Association”. This management body comprises various member organisations including the local communities of the park, town councils, conservation groups and others with a stake in the area such as recreation and tourist bodies. The primary aims of park management are to maintain the character, beauty and recreational value of the Pfalz landscape, and develop the area as a model region for the harmonious interaction of man and nature, according to the aims of the UNESCO MAB programme.

A Development Plan for the park is currently in preparation, which will set the framework for management in the coming years. A process of consultation on the first draft is currently taking place with those interested in or affected by the park.

A Broad Approach to Forestry Management

The past decades have seen considerable decline in the traditional economic activities of the Pfalz forest’s inhabitants such as agriculture, forestry and timber production, traditional handicrafts and a former local shoe industry. The Pfälzerwald Nature Park and Biosphere Reserve seeks to halt this decline and develop models for sustainable development which respect nature, conserve natural resources and provide economic opportunities for local people.

In terms of forestry management, fulfilling this aim has meant taking a broad approach. Principles of sustainability have been applied not only to basic timber production, but also to

the development of model initiatives regarding the use of local timber, renewable energy schemes, and forest-based recreation activities.

A concept for sustainable forestry

The forests of the Pfälzerwald Nature Park, which cover c. 75% of the area, are managed by the local offices of the state Forestry Administration. A good partnership has been developed over the years between the Forestry Administration and the park management. Representatives of the Forestry Administration and a key forest research institute sit respectively on the Board and Scientific Council of the Nature Park. Furthermore, the Forestry Administration seeks cooperation with different interest groups within the park through work with the "Pfälzerwald Association", a membership association for the promotion of conservation and recreation activities in the region.

As set out in the Forestry Administration's "Framework concept for Forestry Management in the Biosphere Reserve Pfälzerwald" (1997), harmony is achieved between ecological and economic objectives through the implementation of a "naturnaher Waldbau" or literally, forestry which is "close to nature", across all the forests of the reserve. The main goals of this concept are:

- stable forest ecosystems as the basis for all natural processes and lifecycles in the forest, and
- multi-functional forests in which conservation and recreation aims are fulfilled alongside the sustainable production of high-quality, strong timber.

Measures to achieve these aims include developing mixed tree stands with a large number of species, selecting tree species which are typical for the region and appropriate to the particular site, leaving old and dead trees in the forest, as well as protecting and encouraging rare flora.

A zoning plan has been drawn up for the park and should come into force during 2004. According to this, the core zones should include the characteristic natural habitats of the Pfälzerwald and allow ecological processes to develop without any direct human intervention. Intensive discussions have taken place between foresters and conservationists regarding the management of forests in this area, and how to deal with those which are not presently in a near-natural state. Thanks to participative debate, a consensus was reached and transition periods agreed during which active measures may be taken to promote typical tree species in these areas.

Wider initiatives

Both the "Framework concept" and the new Development Plan of the nature park also set out a range of measures relating to use of forest products which go beyond simple timber production. These include model initiatives to promote the "eco-product" local timber, to support the local timber market and thus secure jobs in the region. One example is the promotion of wood as a traditional building material, particularly in ecological house construction. Events on the theme "Ecological building with wood" have been held in various regions of the Biosphere Reserve and met with considerable local interest. A periodic architectural competition for construction with wood aims to give further support to this project.

A further initiative focuses on the use of wood for energy purposes, as a local alternative to oil and gas in private homes. In light of damage to the forest as well as ozone problems in the summer due to the burning of fossil fuels, the Forestry Administration and Biosphere Reserve have taken lead roles in the development and promotion of a heating system which effectively combines wood and solar energy under the motto "100% energy from the sun."

Besides forestry, tourism has become an increasingly important factor for the local economy. The new Development Plan recognises the forest as the “trademark” of the Pfälzerwald and as such a good resource for recreation opportunities based on the appreciation of nature. Initiatives to date include the organisation of “Forest experience holidays with the forester” by the Forest Administration, and the opening of a “Forest Youth Hostel” in the Nature Park. Educational activities for the local audience include, for example “Forest youth games” for local school classes from both the German and French parts of the cross-border biosphere reserve.

A network for sustainability

The Nature Park management has identified a need to link the many different initiatives taking place through a “network for sustainability”, which should both provide impulses for regional development and coordinate educational and public awareness-raising activities. At the heart of this network lies the “House of Sustainability” being planned in partnership with the Forestry Administration as the communication centre for this network. The house should act as an information centre for visitors, as a centre for promoting communication between different actors and stakeholders in the biosphere reserve and for promoting local identification with the reserve as a model landscape for sustainable development. The building itself should have a model function, demonstrating the use of solar energy and of local timber as a building material and energy resource. Construction is currently in progress and the opening of the house scheduled for 2004.

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2.2 Triglav National Park, Slovenia – A Framework for Sustainable Forest Use

IUCN Protected Area Category: II / V

Year of Establishment: 1981

Size of Protected Area: 83,305 ha.

The Triglav National Park in north-west Slovenia is one of the oldest national parks in the Alps. Although the park in its present size and form was formally designated in 1981, part of it was protected in 1924 and the area first declared a national park in 1961. The park covers almost the entire Slovenian area of the Julian alps, and was named after its highest peak Mount Triglav (2864 m.). Besides the rocky mountains, deep glacier valleys and high mountain pastures, forests are the most typical landscape element, covering two-thirds of the park’s total area.

Management of the National Park

Under direction of the Ministry of Environment, the Public Institution Triglav National Park is entrusted with management of the national park. Management is supervised by a Council comprising representatives of the government, the six municipalities within the park, representatives of NGOs (mountain and hunting associations) and the employees. The Slovene Nature Conservation Act, which provides the legal basis for national park

management, is currently under amendment. Once this process is complete, a new management plan will be adopted for the park.

According to the Triglav National Park Act (1993), the park is divided into two zones: the central zone, in which priority is given to the protection of nature, maintaining its pristine condition and the values of an unspoiled wilderness, and a peripheral zone, in which the emphasis is on the protection and care of cultural landscape as well as the promotion of sustainable development.

Sustainable Use of the Park's Forests

Management of the forests in the Triglav National Park follows a policy of sustainable use which applies to forests across Slovenia. In the latter 19th century, Slovene foresters were the first to eliminate certain areas of forest from economic use and to designate them as forest reserves. These were Slovenia's first protected areas. Generally it can be observed that Slovene forestry practice has not only helped to protect the forests, but also to increase their total surface area, raise the value of forest ecosystems and increase biodiversity. Since 1955 clear-cuts have been prohibited everywhere in the country.

In the Triglav region, human intervention has played an important role in forest development. Intensive exploitation from the 16th century onwards significantly changed some of the forests. However, in recent decades, the emphasis has been placed on sustainable management and use, resulting in regeneration of the forests and a gradual return to near-natural condition.

Today, management of the national park's forests ranges from areas where no human intervention is permitted to areas where commercial logging prevails. Alongside 9 forest reserves under the strictest protection (a total 1014 ha.), a further 9000 ha. are designated as "permanent protective forests". These are not exploited for commercial purposes, and protect the lower lying areas from the danger of avalanches and landslides.

The remaining forests in the park can be considered "managed forests". Here timber cutting is permitted, alongside other non-commercial forest management activities which aim to maintain the traditional mixed forests. Virtually all forest regeneration is natural, and where planting takes place it is with broad-leaved, native species. Although timber cutting can take place here, commercial use is considered just one of a range of important forest functions, alongside ecological, landscape, hydrologic, climatic, educational and recreational functions. The task of the forester is to ensure that the forest can continue to fulfil these varied roles.

Cooperation in forest management planning and practice

Successful management of the park's forests relies on effective cooperation – between the forest and park authorities, as well as with local landowners.

According to the Forest Act (1993), management of all Slovene forests is carried out by the Slovene Forestry Service, irrespective of the ownership of the land. On the territory of the Triglav National Park, the role of the Forestry Service is closely linked to the activities of the National Park Authority. The national park prepares its own environmental plans and other management documents, which in turn are taken into consideration by those responsible for drawing up the Forest Management Plans. It is a legal requirement that regional authorities for the conservation of natural and cultural heritage are involved in the process for adopting Forest Management Plans. The presence of a conservationist on the council of the Forestry Service also acts as a "safety fuse". Furthermore, local people may contribute to the process of preparing the Forest Management Plans when the drafts are presented to the public.

At practical level, nature conservationists and foresters meet in the field virtually every day and cooperation functions well in practice. Where differences of opinion exist, for example with regard to visitor management in certain forest areas of the park, a mutually acceptable solution is sought and usually found. This is a clear step forward from the 1980s, when differences between nature conservation and the former Forest Administrations were more pronounced.

Many educational activities are undertaken by the Forestry Service, and this represents a further area where its activities are closely linked to those of the park. Forest excursions are organised in cooperation with the park, and two joint nature trails have been set up.

The ownership structure of the park's forests is currently undergoing change, with nationalised forests gradually being returned to their former owners. This means the majority of the park's forests are privately owned. However, private owners also work according to the Forest Management Plans, which specify the maximum amount of timber which may be felled in a particular area of managed forest, leaving it to the owners to decide whether or not to log. Although anomalies still occur with regard to felling, by working within the framework of an agreed Forest Management Plan significant conflicts can be avoided.

Benefits for conservation and local stakeholders

The people living in the Triglav National Park and surrounding settlements have always been attached to the forests, which were traditionally their key source of livelihood. Nowadays people are less economically reliant on the forests, although timber production still represents an important source of income for forest owners. Above all however, local people have a sense of *pride* in their forests, and this non-commercial value has become increasingly significant.

The forest management system in the park enables local landowners to manage the forest in a sustainable manner. They contribute to the conservation of the park's typical native forests, whilst having relative freedom to use their forest resources within the specifications of the Forest Management Plans. The categorisation of the park's forests into various levels of protection and management ensures that the types of use in different areas can be regulated, and that areas are set aside for the aims of ecosystem protection, research and recreation in natural forests. Owners of "permanent protective forest" areas, where felling is not permitted, are freed from a particular land tax as compensation for this limitation. Overall these arrangements represent a type of consensus between authorities and local stakeholders, enabling the on-going conservation and sustainable use of the park's forests.

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3. Sustainable Tourism Development

3.1 La Garrotxa Nature Park, Spain – Developing a Partnership Structure for Tourism Development

IUCN Protected Area Category: V

Year of Establishment: 1982 as a "Natural place of national interest"; 1986 as Nature Park.

Size of Protected Area: 14,800 ha.

The Nature Park of the Volcanic Region of La Garrotxa is located in the easternmost part of the Pyrenees, in the north-east of Catalonia. It is the best preserved volcanic region on the Iberian peninsula, and thus of particular geological interest. The park is characterised by contrasting landscapes with large areas of woodland, mosaic-like farmlands, pastures, and traditional rural dwellings. The area has been strongly influenced and shaped by man's activity. A key aim of the nature park – besides conservation and the facilitation of recreation activities – is to demonstrate the feasibility of sustainable management of the area's natural resources.

Management of the Nature Park

The "Protection Commission" of the nature park is the main organ responsible for supervising management and setting the overall framework for the park's activities. It includes representatives of the regional Council of Garrotxa, of the autonomous government of Catalonia as well as the Institute of Catalan Studies. Integration of local stakeholders into park management is achieved via the "Cooperation Council", which comprises 30 representatives of varied professional sectors, local associations and hunting societies. The majority of staff employed on the park management team are from the area, and a large proportion of the park's information and training activities is currently targeted towards the local population.

Designation of the park came in response to mining activities destroying the volcanoes, as well as the negative effects of urban growth, intensification of agriculture and industrialisation of the region. Initially the park strategy focused on conservation and regeneration of the territory, with the development of models of sustainable use gaining increasing importance over recent years. The present management plan, adopted in 1994, is currently being revised to meet new realities in the park.

Tourism Development

As tourism started to increase in the region in the early 1990s, a manager of the park became concerned about the potential negative impact of uncontrolled development in future years. A viable way forward was found in working together with all the parties involved in local tourism. This has resulted in a model for organising sustainable tourism development at regional level which has been the inspiration for similar structures in other protected areas across Europe.

In 1996 the "Associó la Garrotxa Terra d'Acolliment Turístic" was founded, now known as "Turisme Garrotxa". The idea behind the association was to establish an active network for the development of sustainable, high quality, environmentally-friendly tourism which would support rather than threaten conservation of the landscape whilst providing economic benefits. Turisme Garrotxa is made up of representatives from the public sector (town councils, county council, the nature park) and private sector (trade guilds, professional associations, and municipal tourist boards) and includes, as beneficiaries of its services, 115 private tourist companies from the county, with whom the association members regularly work. The intention has never been to take the place of other existing associations, but rather to bring them together and coordinate their actions, to give them more weight.

Turisme Garrotxa is funded by members' fees and income from services and marketing initiatives. Services provided by the association include the production of leaflets, guides, and maps which aim to take visitors to less sensitive sites. The association manages relations with the media and negotiates with tour operators. With the help of external funding it has also published a regional guide on sustainable tourism giving advice for local businesses, and offers a training programme for the tourism sector.

Developing and implementing a common strategy

Turisme Garrotxa represents a permanent forum for on-going consultation with different tourism stakeholders. In the course of meetings, seminars and workshops, this forum analysed the strengths and weaknesses of tourism development in the region and started working on a range of issues, in order to draw up a sustainable tourism strategy and joint five-year action programme for the period 2001-2005, following the requirements of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas¹.

The strategy has been completed at a time when tourism is still an opportunity for the region rather than a problem, and thus enables the nature park and its local partners to take a proactive approach to steering tourism development more or less from the start.

Examples of the innovative projects being implemented within the action programme include:

- A very successful programme of cooperation with 32 private tourist companies including hotels, restaurants, Bed & Breakfast, camping sites, etc. which are accredited as official "Park Information Points" following intensive training. The Information Points maintain close contact to Turisme Garrotxa, and serve both to provide information to visitors and to gather data *about* visitors to the park for future planning purposes.
- An ambitious project with EU "Leader Plus" funding to develop La Garrotxa as a European footpath destination. This has included a market survey to identify potential clients and their needs, an inventory of existing public footpaths, and planning of the future path network with connected services and facilities. The result should be a high quality product, which will be promoted through specialised tour operators.

Benefits from working together

The potential gained by linking all tourism sectors under the umbrella of an organised association in which the nature park is a key partner has become increasingly apparent. Besides the possibilities for joint planning and mutual support, Turisme Garrotxa itself is recognised as the key body for questions relating to tourism in the region, and has secured a unique position for negotiation with public authorities, funding agencies and other organisations. Ultimately, the Turisme Garrotxa network is facilitating on-going improvement in the quality and competitiveness of tourism facilities, whilst taking care of the region's natural capital.

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3.2 Les Cévennes National Park, France - Balancing Tourism Development with Traditional Economic Activities

IUCN Protected Area Category: V

Year of Establishment: 1970

Size of Protected Area: Central zone: 91279 ha., Peripheral zone: 229726 ha.

Les Cévennes is the largest of the French national parks and the only one which is inhabited. The landscape of this middle mountain range in the "Massif Central" has been shaped by the

¹ The European Charter is a system for improving the sustainable development and management of tourism in protected areas, developed under the umbrella of the EUROPARC Federation. La Garrotxa Nature Park became a member of the Charter in 2001.

farmers and particularly livestock breeders who have lived on and from the land over the centuries. The aims of the national park include maintaining the balance between man's traditional activities and nature in the area, and working towards sustainable rural development. The survival of agro-pastoral activities is seen as key to maintaining the park's open spaces, and thus to conserving biodiversity and landscape. The park is a recognised biosphere reserve under the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme.

Management of the National Park

The park administration is a public body, managed by a Director and an Administrative Council which comprises representatives of the local population, state administrators and other relevantly qualified persons. As such, the involvement of varied interests in the management of the park is assured.

The park management plan – currently valid for the period 2000-2006 – represents the key planning instrument. The preparation of this plan involved a broad consultation process, including a series of public meetings in 1999 for discussion of its strategic orientations.

Tourism: In Balance with Traditional Activities

The development of sustainable tourism is well integrated in the park's overall management programme. Tourism is perceived as just one of the different economic activities required to keep the park region alive, and as such is developed in conjunction with varied local actors.

The park has a "Tourism Commission" –one of several topical commissions established for consultation and planning – which comprises 20 representatives of varied public and private interests from the tourism sector. This Commission contributed to development of the sustainable tourism axes of the park's management plan. In 2001, a wider "Association Cévennes Ecotourisme" was created, bringing together local tourism enterprises and related institutions. The Association has since developed to become the permanent, recognised interface between the park and tourism businesses in the area.

In 2002 the national park became a member of the "European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas". The aims and methodology of the Charter have formed the basis for development of the park's tourism policies over recent years.

Encouraging local partnerships

The tourism activities implemented by the park seek to encourage partnership between stakeholders and to promote a sense of shared responsibility for the region. Examples include:

- The "Festival of Nature" between May and September, which brings together local partners and visitors for a series of 200 special events.
- "Ecomuseums": a set of tourist routes designed to facilitate the discovery of local heritage. Massif by massif, they take visitors to exhibitions and museums on aspects of local life, along educational trails, to typical hamlets, farms, and other places which demonstrate traditional elements of cévenol civilisation.
- "Sentiers autour du parc": A network of "trails around the park" of varied duration, developed in conjunction with partners in the peripheral zone. These trails offer opportunities to discovery natural heritage and encounter local people and culture. Accompanying leaflets provide practical information on where to eat, sleep, find local services etc. Signposting and maintenance of the trails is carried out by the local communities.

Links to agriculture are promoted through initiatives such as the "Authentiques du parc", in which breeders, butchers and restaurant owners work in partnership with the park to offer

“added value” consumer products for visitors and residents. Local beef and lamb is produced through traditional breeding methods under this scheme, according to strict conditions laid down by the park. Visitors can visit the places where the animals are raised and meet the breeders, and information panels about the programme may be put up by the national park. Each of the products in the series is presented in a special leaflet, illustrating the aims of the programme and giving a list of breeders, participating butchers and restaurants.

Working with tourism businesses

Under the umbrella of the “IPAMAC” association, which includes 7 regional parks in the Massif Central plus Les Cévennes, the national park has completed a pilot initiative to develop stronger partnerships with tourism businesses in the area. The initiative was developed in line with the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, and with the aim of enabling local businesses to devise individual development strategies which are coherent with the wider tourism strategy of the park. According to the IPAMAC methodology, participating businesses commit themselves to preparing a 3-year strategy which includes economic, social and environmental actions, in partnership with the park. Furthermore, they agree to take part in collective actions and projects. In turn, they benefit from technical support and training provided by the park, as well as from the contacts developed with other participating businesses.

Following completion of the pilot, the park is now actively implementing this scheme. In early 2004, the first 6 participating businesses had their strategies formally approved and signed contracts with the park for their implementation over the coming years. For the park, such partnerships mean it is able to structure its own activities around a reliable, high level of tourist service in the region. Both park and businesses hope to gain a competitive advantage over other tourist destinations by working together and promoting the special qualities of tourism in protected areas.

Benefits for residents, visitors and for conservation

By integrating sustainable tourism development firmly into wider park management planning and creating partnerships between different sectors and stakeholders, a range of benefits can be achieved from tourism activity in Les Cévennes:

For conservation:

- by engaging local businesses to meet environmental standards and work in line with park aims
- by promoting visitor activities outside the most sensitive central areas of the park (e.g. the “Sentiers autour du Parc”)
- by supporting traditional activities which contribute to maintenance of biodiversity and the landscape (e.g. grazing through the “Authentiques du parc” initiative)

For local livelihoods:

- through a coherent approach to Les Cévennes as a protected area tourist destination, focusing on the particular local features and culture
- by promoting the use of local products and services to visitors
- by seeking to keep people on the land and engaged in traditional activities

For the visitor:

- by providing a range of attractive activities and high quality services based on the special characteristics of Les Cévennes
- by seeking to maintain the very landscape which visitors come to see.

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3.3 Exmoor National Park, England – Practical Initiatives for Sustainable Tourism Development

IUCN Protected Area Category: V

Year of Establishment: 1954

Size of Protected Area: 71,422 ha.

Exmoor National Park is situated in South West England, and is one of England's smaller national parks. The park contains a variety of landscapes, including a central plateau of open moorland, towering cliffs and rocky headlands, and steep wooded ravines.

Management of the National Park

The park's work is coordinated by the National Park Authority, a public body consisting of 26 appointed members who represent parish, district, or county, or have been appointed for their particular skills and knowledge relating to management of the park. The Authority is responsible for agreeing the measures to achieve the park's key aims: conservation, enhancement of natural beauty, and the promotion of education and recreation opportunities. A further statutory duty of the Authority is to foster the economic, social and cultural well-being of the local community.

A National Park Management Plan provides the framework for the activities of the park. This is reviewed on a five-year basis, involving a process of wide public consultation. Meetings of the National Park Authority are open to the public, and there are other forums for providing advice to the National Park Authority and for communicating with the community and other stakeholders, such as the "Exmoor Consultative Forum" and the "District and Parish Consultative Group".

Tourism Initiatives

The economy of Exmoor is service-based, with tourism forming a moderate proportion of the economy. In terms of the number of people employed and income generated, tourism represents the largest industry in the National Park, with tourism and agriculture together accounting for more than half the businesses on Exmoor.

The park has set out a vision for tourism on Exmoor in its management plan as follows:
"A tourism industry that is healthy, prosperous and based on Exmoor's special qualities. Tourist facilities contributing to sustainable development and the understanding and enjoyment of the qualities for which Exmoor was designated. Visitors making a positive contribution to the conservation and enhancement of the National Park environment and local economic and social well-being."

Over recent years, various initiatives have been undertaken towards achieving these aims.

Partnerships for excellence

The Exmoor National Park was one of the European parks involved in piloting the “European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas” between 1995 and 1998. The following year, it started a 12-month pilot project to trial the Charter in more detail with tourism operators on Exmoor, aiming to develop closer relations between the National Park Authority and individual businesses, and to look at methods for encouraging tour operators to “green” their business practices. The pilot project worked with so-called “Green Audit Kits” which provide practical guidance for businesses on, for example, how to save energy and water, reduce waste, and increase the use of local products. This pilot revealed increasing acceptance and implementation of sustainable tourism principles by businesses on Exmoor. The 22 participating businesses welcomed the opportunity to work closer with the Exmoor National Park Authority and regarded the partnership as highly valuable in terms of the credibility that it gave their business.

Building on the results of this first initiative, the national park is now hosting a five-year national demonstration project entitled “QUEST – Quality Underpins Exmoor’s Sustainable Tourism”. The project brings together a range of organisations and businesses from the public and private sector with the aim of strengthening Exmoor as a high quality rural tourism destination, and encouraging sustainable tourism practices amongst visitors and businesses. In a first stage, the project has been focussing on achieving greater co-ordination in the management of tourism, and has set up a Strategic Action Plan for sustainable tourism on Exmoor. Opportunities were provided for local residents and stakeholders to contribute to the development of this plan, in particular through a series of consultation meetings at varied locations in the Exmoor area during 2003. The need for effective coordination of tourism development activities was a key issue arising from consultation on the Action Plan, and the “Visit Exmoor Partnership” has now been established in which public and private bodies – including the National Park Authority – are committed to working together to promote the Exmoor tourism product. Further activities planned under the QUEST initiative include research on existing and potential visitor markets, activities to provide training and other technical support to local tourism businesses, as well as monitoring of the tourism impact on the environment and local economy with a view to steering future developments.

Encouraging “visitor payback”

Besides the above activities, the QUEST initiative seeks to promote projects which encourage visitor appreciation of – and spending on – the special aspects of Exmoor. The idea of encouraging visitors to contribute financially to nature protection is not new in this national park. In 1997, the “Exmoor Paths Partnership” started with the support of the Park Authority, National Trust, English Nature and EU-funding. The scheme aimed to combat the erosion of paths in the national park, improve wildlife habitat and introduce a system of finance by voluntary contributions from visitors, an initiative which became known as “visitor payback”.

This initiative started at two local hotels, where the menu invited customers to pay £0.50 more on the price of a meal, to help protect the natural heritage of Exmoor. The hotels guaranteed to match all monies donated. In the first year, the initiative generated £1100, half of which was spent on restoration of the paths and the rest on other conservation projects within the park. The scheme was extended to include voluntary contributions on accommodation, sporting events, bar and restaurant bills and sales in visitor centres, and within a year over 40 partnerships with local businesses were achieved. It was possible to raise more than £15,000 during the first 3-year period. As a further added benefit, visitors were encouraged to do voluntary conservation work on the paths in the park as part of the scheme.

Tourism and other businesses continue to raise funds on behalf of the Paths Partnership, which has generated a number of highly original ideas for raising money over the past years. The National Park Authority seeks to develop the visitor payback system further in future, and to look at possibilities for spreading the benefits to other conservation projects in the park.

Benefits for conservation and local stakeholders

Cooperation with local partners – particularly from the tourism industry – is helping the park to develop a sustainable tourism in the region, and to create a “green” tourism product which should attract visitors, conserve the environment and secure local livelihoods in the tourism sector. Businesses can benefit in terms of the positive image created by their association with the park and the marketing opportunities this generates. The park, for its part, has a proactive role in helping to shape the type of tourism developing in the region, and in influencing sound environmental practice amongst local business partners. The monitoring of markets and tourism impacts under the QUEST project will further help to steer future developments, and ensure that tourism benefits rather than damages the park and its local communities.

In the shorter term, direct financial benefits for conservation are obtained in the form of “visitor payback” schemes, enabling visitors to provide direct support for the preservation of local heritage, habitat and landscapes.

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