



*Nature Park Maas-Schwalm-Nette -Photo M.Hector*

## **FINAL REPORT**

*By Stefania Petrosillo, Transboundary Parks Programme coordinator*

### **TransParcNet Meeting 2023 FIRE AND WATER**

## **How to deal with 'natural' disasters in transboundary parks cooperation?**

*German-Dutch Nature Park Maas-Schwalm-Nette (DE-NL)*

*20-23 June 2023*

---

## Introduction

Climate Change and its effects does not stop at borders. Whether it is dry summers leading to forest fires, or high amounts of rain in a small-time frame causing flooding, these disasters require a transnational approach.

“*Fire and water – how to deal with ‘natural’ disasters in transboundary cooperation?*” was the topic of the 2023 TransParcNet meeting, the annual gathering of EUROPARC’s Transboundary Park Areas.

During the programme, professionals discovered and discussed how Transboundary Protected Areas can work together to prevent and manage “natural” disasters. The programme included lectures, workshops, excursions and, of course, cultural evenings.

The meeting was hosted by the German-Dutch Nature Park Maas-Schwalm-Nette (DE-NL), from 20 – 23 June 2023. Around 35 participants from 13 countries took part of the event.

---

### 1. News from the TransParcNet. Discovering our hosting park. Help from the EU. Fire!

After the arrival and registrations of participants on Tuesday, the meeting officially started on Wednesday 21.06.

The warm **welcome from the organizers Mr André Classen, Nature Park Maas-Schwalm-Nette Managing Director and Mrs Melanie Hüpkes, Nature Park Maas-Schwalm-Nette Project manager**, was followed by the ***Update about Transboundary Parks Programme and the network***, presented by **Mrs Stefania Petrosillo (TB Programme coordinator), Mr Leo Reyrynk and Mrs Mojca Smolej (co-chairs of the TB Task Force) and Mr Stefano Santi (Council member) (\*)**. Even if, unfortunately, the collaboration in two areas is affected by the current war in Ukraine, the richness of initiatives and activities of the wide transboundary parks shows how much the TransParcNet is alive.



© A Benzoni

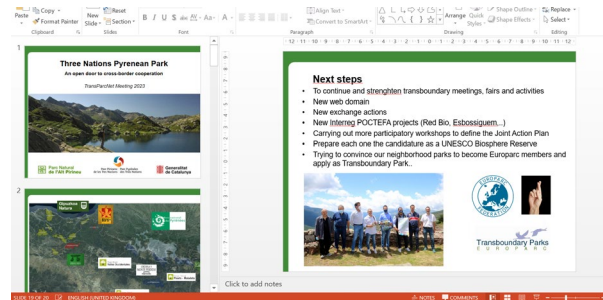
S. Petrosillo. Sharing news about the TransParcNet network.

© EUROPARC





As each year, we were delighted to have an external guest presenting a crossborder area that is not (yet!) member of the TransParcNet. **Mr Marc Garriga Lujan, Director of the Parc Natural de l'Alt Pirineu introduced the work of the cross border area Three Nations Park of Pyrenees (\*)** composed by 4 parks (the Alt Pirineu Natural Park in Catalonia, the Regional Natural Park of the Pyrenees Ariégoises in France and the Sorteny Valley and Comapedrosa Valley Natural Parks in Andorra). We really hope to have this beautiful and active area on board in the future.



Marc Garriga. 3 Nations, 4 parks.  
© S. Petrosillo

Experts and academics provided very interesting contributions, increasing the scientific knowledge of participants about the theme of the meeting.

**Prof. Dr. J. G. Goldammer (Global Fire Monitoring Center / Fire Ecology Research Group, Germany), offered a passionate lecture about Fire Management and Wildfire Risk Reduction in Cross-boundary Protected Areas, (\*)** from a historical perspective up to the present, about the use of prescribed burning to support habitats and species, and the management of fires' crisis and catastrophes. The professor also indicated many tools and methodologies useful to increase the capacity of fires management.



Prof. Dr. J. G. Goldammer sharing knowledge, ideas and tools, from the past to today. © S.Petrosillo

History landscape expert, **Mr H. Kuijpers**, gave a complete and very interesting vision of the complex history of the countryside and of the borders of the Maas-Swalm-Nette territory (\*), paving the way to Mr A. Claassen who presented the German-Dutch Nature Park Maas-Schwalm-Nette and its current management. (\*)



H. Kuijpers and A. Claassen: landscape and borders of the Maas-Swalm-Nette in the past and today  
© S. Petrosillo

The dialogue between EUROPARC and the European Commission is continuous and reached another positive step thanks the participation online of **Mr Gaetano Vivo**, Deputy Head of Unit, Disaster Risk Management, DG ECHO. He presented the *Union Civil Protection Mechanism response: the data collected about the risks in EU and the economic impact of disasters, the role of ECHO in supporting campaigns of awareness and prevention, and related programmes and projects that can be accessible for Protected Areas (\*)*. The discussion will continue in Brussels, and we hope to see some Transboundary Parks directly involved in future ECHO initiatives.



**e-Learning course**  
Economics for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness

Drawing on the findings of the study, a self-paced online course is available on **EU Academy** →

**Wildfire risk awareness campaigns**

**Examples**

- ITALY - "don't take risks" campaign
- AUSTRIA - Educational material
- GERMANY - "Zuhause" campaign
- PORTUGAL - "Stop wildfires" campaign
- POLAND - "Stop across fires" campaign
- SLOVENIA - Month of Fire Safety
- IRELAND - Be Summer ready
- CZECHIA - "Don't Back - forest fire awareness campaign"

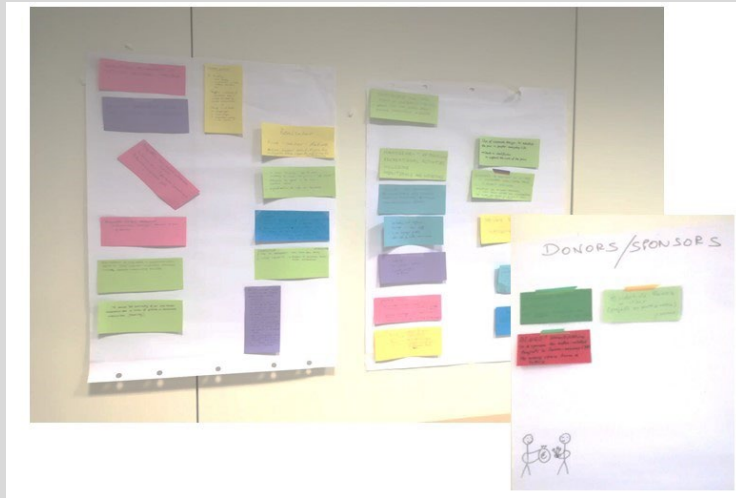
**Wildfire prevention projects co-funded under the UCPM: recent examples**

- Single-country grants for disaster risk management
  - Latvia: Feasibility study for wildfire fighting services
  - Türkiye: Wildfire prevention and response capacity building for forest villages
  - Türkiye: Long-term wildfire prevention action plan for Istanbul forest region
- Multi-country grants for prevention and preparedness
  - WUITIPS: Identify infrastructures protection from wildland-urban-interface fires
  - SAILOR: Forest fires risk assessment at cross-border action plan Georgia & Azerbaijan
  - WUIVIEW: Vulnerability assessment of buildings in wildland-urban interface communities
  - VESPREA: Assessment of vulnerable elements and integration into a geographic information-based platform
  - PREVAIL: "Smart" wildfire prevention solutions involving citizens, land managers, and fire operators
- Recently finished projects

Many inspiring information provided by Mr G. Vivo  
© S. Petrosillo



### Meeting between the Transboundary Parks Projects Working Group and the network



A more detailed report will be prepared and share within the network.  
All these inputs will be considered by the working group for future development.

The annual TransParcNet meetings are the best moment for the network to discuss about possible future developments of the programme and of the network. After the **presentations of Leo Reyriink and Pertti Itkonen (\*)**, guided by the members of the “Transboundary Parks Projects Working Group”, the participants expressed ideas, challenges and possible donors, for common projects. They identified key topics, such as: youth involvement, training and exchanges of staff, public awareness to prevent emergencies, and - especially – nature restauration’s methods after natural catastrophes.

In 2020 a big fire affected the park at the border between DE and NL. The excursion to the *burn site Nationaal Park De Meinweg 2020* helped the participants to see the places, understand the dynamic of the disaster, and know the actions taken during and after the event. **Mr A. Verheijden, from the Brandweer Limburg-Noord, and Mr L. Reyriink, Parks Director at that time, resumed the lections learned after this fire:** it is crucial to have previous cross border and reciprocal knowledge and personal relationship, that helps enormously in the collaboration in the emergency; the detailed knowledge of the territories is also essential; parks and local actors have to be consulted and actively implicated, even when the dimension of the catastrophe requires the involvement of the national authorities.



Visit on the field with A. Verheijden and L. Reyriink

© S. Petrosillo



The traditional and unmissable dinner with the local products from the different transboundary areas, seasoned with typical songs and music, concluded at the Naturschutzstation Haus Wildenrath the long and inspiring first day.

© S. Petrosillo

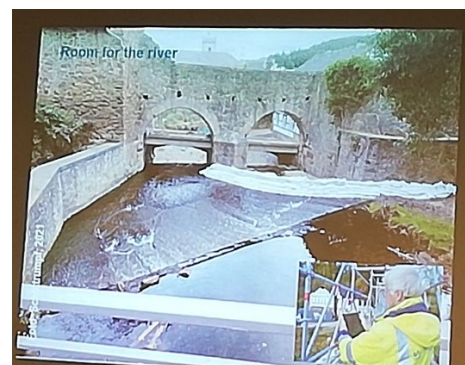
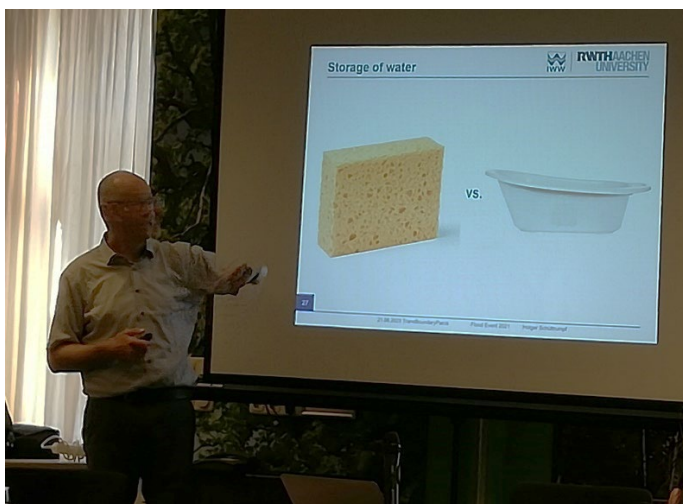


## 2. The water. The climate. The lessons learned. Networking. Enjoy!

The Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> started with a welcome by **Mrs Pollux-Linszen, the chairwomen of the Nature Park Maas-Schwalm-Nette board**, and continued with plenary lectures, this time about water management and floods preventions.

**Prof. Dr. Schüttrumpf, from RWTH Aachen University, presented the case of the heavy rain that induced floodings in 2021 (\*)** in central Europe, including in the area of the Park. Starting from this terrible experience, recently recurred in Italy, the speaker illustrated in its very interesting speech, the challenges that the current use of the territory, especially in terms of urbanism, produced in case of extreme but not so rare events.

A concrete example of the impact of the inundation in 2021 on a cultural heritage and economic activity was described during the visit in the afternoon to the historical Kasteel Daelenbroek.



Prof. Dr. Schüttrumpf: water needs space...

© S. Petrosillo



What happens outside the Protected Areas affects them: as we know very well, the borders are often just an artificial human creation. Near the Mass-Schwalm-Nette area, a large part of the territory is devoted to mining activities for lignite extraction. **Dr. R. Jaritz and D. Berger explained the “Monitoring Garzweiler II” and the effects of lignite mining on the groundwater situation and on the vegetation in the wetlands along the Schwalm river. (\*)** The mining activity requires a change of the level of aquifer, therefore the water is pumped away and, through a complex system, used to create lakes and wetlands. Indeed, the all-hydrologic system of the park is connected and affected by the exploitation of the mine. A good dialogue between management authorities and a strong control of the environmental impact is therefore more than necessary.

The visit of the brown coal day mining Garzweiler the following day, on 23<sup>rd</sup>, allowed some participants to better understand the dimension and the activity of the mine.

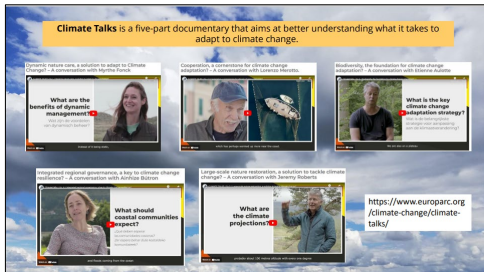


Mining, from today to tomorrow: the challenges of minimizing the current impacts and of restoring in the future.

@ S. Petrosillo



Fires, floods, drought are not only extreme events. A general fast modification of the territories and habitats is ongoing, due of the current climate change. **Mrs L. Bardot, from the Scarpe Escaut European Nature Park, and Mrs S. Petrosillo illustrated how to include climate change impact in the parks management’s plans using the Scarpe Escaut concrete experience, and the results, methodologies, ideas, lections learned from the Natura’Adapt project (\*).**



L. Bardot illustrating the *Life Natur'Adaptation Plan* of the Scarpe Escaut Park

@ S. Santi



**The vulnerability analysis shows a sensitivity and fragility of wet environments linked to climate change**

		Vulnerability to climate change
Areas Typology	Rainforest	Highly vulnerable
	Monospecific afforestation	Highly vulnerable
	Wet meadow	Very highly vulnerable
	Pond	vulnerable
	Mining collapse ponds and ponds	Highly vulnerable
	Marsh, bog, reed bed	Very highly vulnerable
	Wet wasteland	Highly vulnerable

**Vulnerability analysis and prospective analysis**



The TransParcNet 2023 closed officially with a great boat trip on the Maas, including dinner and festive evening with music and dance.

To have fun together is an essential part of the TransParcNet's life!

@S. Santi

### **Transboundary Parks Task Force meeting**

As usual during the TransParcNet events, the TB Task Force met. They discussed and decided about:

- the preparations of the TB programme and network's presence and visibility at the EUROPARC Conference 2023 in Leeuwarden (NL) - Market Place on Wednesday 4th of October;
- the TransParcNet meeting 2024 that will take place in HALDI area (NO/FI). Main theme: Monitoring and surveys of nature and visitors in TB areas
- Possible candidates to host the TransParcNet meeting in next years: 2025 Krkonoše/Karkonoše or Neusiedler See, 2026 Scarpe-Escaut (France-Flandres), future: International Nature Park Moor (D/NL)
- How to use the EU B-solution program for TB areas

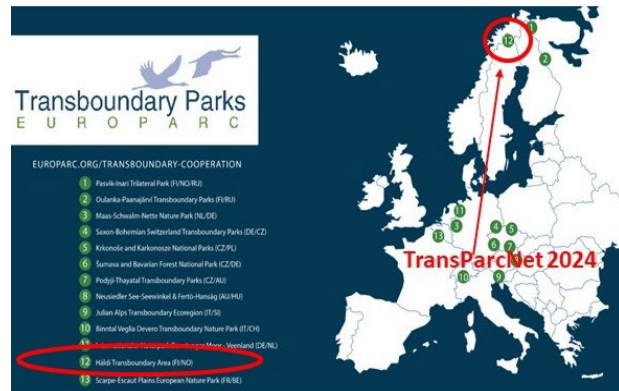
The detailed report of the meeting will be distributed to the TransParcNet members.



Thanks to organizers, speakers and participants, and... see you next year!



The perfect hosts 2023, Melanie and André  
@ S. Petrosillo



@ A. Claassen

(\* ) The complete speakers' presentations are available [on the EUROPARC website here](#).