



A Benefit Monitor for protected areas

One of the outcomes of the PARKS & BENEFITS project was the implementation of a Benefit Monitor in the protected areas that participated. This research was carried out by the Institute for Geography at the Ernst-Moritz-Arndt University of Greifswald. The following article is written by Prof. Steingruber who led this part of the project.

Although the term “benefits” is a buzzword, it is indisputable that protected areas have many positive effects. Their benefits extend from local people who live near these beautiful and healthy landscapes, to nations that depend on their environmental services and to the global community that profit from nature’s capacity to regulate the climate. There are not only ecological but also socio-economic benefits.

The BENEFIT-MONITOR is a significant tool for protected area management which highlights all relevant assets. First of all, the tool provides a systematic collection of data on different issues in the protected area. It can therefore be used as an observation and controlling tool that provides an overview of what is going on in the area. The monitor needs to be updated on a regular basis and can then become a decision-making aid for the management.

The monitor also pinpoints a collection of crucial aspects of the protected area that can be used for promotion and advertisement purposes. The management can for instance use the data collected and for to promote the area in different ways and at diverse events.

In addition, the list of benefits that the monitor helps to pin-point helps to justify the money that is spent on maintaining and managing a protected area. Protected areas need to promote their benefits to show that they are great assets for regional development.

Despite the importance of the social and economic aspects it is obvious that without healthy ecosystems, a lasting and sustained social and economic development is not possible. The BENEFIT-MONITOR follows this integral model of sustainability with data falling under each of these categories. Key data may however fall under the infrastructure benefits category. This section enables the protected area to document the benefits. Here pictures can be uploaded and facilities promoted to tourists.

Within the PARKS & BENEFITS project the BENEFIT-MONITOR was carried out as a web-based tool. Every participating protected area has its own pages within the monitor but the the required indicators are the same for all participants. The idea was for the parks to discover their own unique benefits and not to then compare the results or rank the areas. The resulting pages of the BENEFIT-MONITOR within the project are currently not published. This may change depending on the decision each protected area makes.

[More information about the BENEFIT-MONITOR or the results of the research carried out in this project.](#)