



PARKS & BENEFITS

Baltic protected areas and tourism

Ways to sustainable management
Socio-economic benefits of conserving nature

GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS



GET INSPIRED.

NATURE RESPECTS NO BOUNDARIES

Protected areas are vital reserves of our shared natural heritage. They are dedicated to the preservation of species, ecosystems and landscapes. Moreover they allow well-managed access, understanding and enjoyment. In a highly engineered world they are our link to nature as it is – unaffected, unpredictable, following its own laws – the link to our origin and to the great context of life.

Connecting people, place and nature is at the heart of protected area managements. Saving our natural inheritance to future generations can only succeed by understanding its meaning to us. A sustainable nature tourism – respecting the preservation objectives – within and around protected areas can be an important element of regional economies.

The Baltic Sea Region holds many sites of typically Baltic and outstanding natural heritage which is preserved in protected areas. But how can we secure this protection if people are not aware of their value? The PARKS & BENEFITS project partners chose an approach that includes both – protection and sustainable management of the natural resources.

Our mission is to point out the economic, ecological and social benefits that a sustainable tourism can generate for protected areas and the regional economy.

This brochure will show you how it can work.
You will find:

- + Research results on how much tourism protected areas can cope with
- + Visitor monitoring and management tools, that worked well for our partners
- + Ways to involve regional stakeholders into public-private partnerships
- + Planning processes and long-term action plans to develop tourism activity based on sustainable principles
- + Solutions for sustainable transport to and within protected areas
- + How ecolabels secure reliable standards for tourism products
- + Marketing approaches for a responsible nature tourism

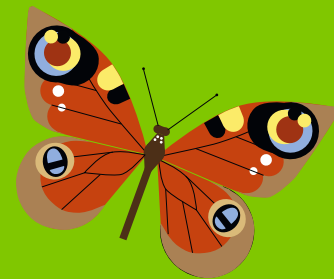
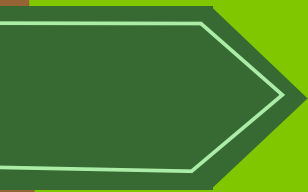


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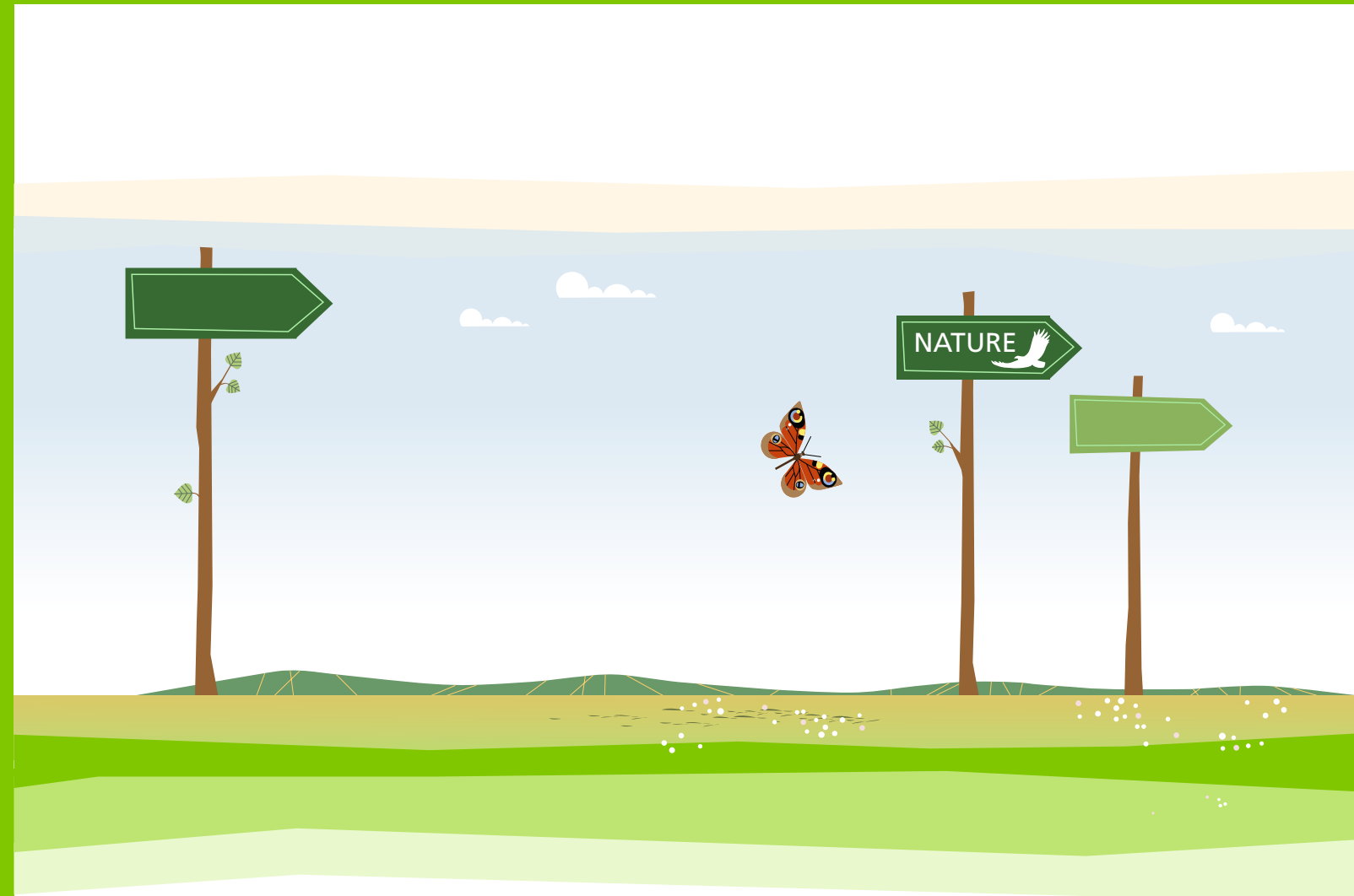
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ABOUT THE CHARTER



ABOUT THE EUROPARC FEDERATION FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS



WHAT'S THE CHARTER ALL ABOUT?

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (the Charter) belongs to the EUROPARC Federation, the umbrella organisation of protected areas in Europe. It was developed by a European group representing protected areas, the tourism industry and partners under the EUROPARC umbrella and builds on the recommendations of the 1993 EUROPARC study "Loving them to Death?" Sustainable Tourism in Europe's Nature and National Parks.

The underlying aims of all Charter activities are: to increase awareness of, and support for, Europe's protected areas as a fundamental part of our heritage, that should

be preserved for and enjoyed by current and future generations; to improve the sustainable development and management of tourism in protected areas, which takes account of the needs of the environment, local residents, local businesses and visitors.

The Charter for protected areas

The Charter is a practical management tool that enables protected areas to develop their tourism sustainably whilst working in partnership with all relevant stakeholders. There are currently over 80 Protected Areas implementing the Charter in over 10 European Countries. To be a "chartered" protected area is to be part of a journey of development, a continuous quest for the successful, sustainable sharing of these magical spaces.

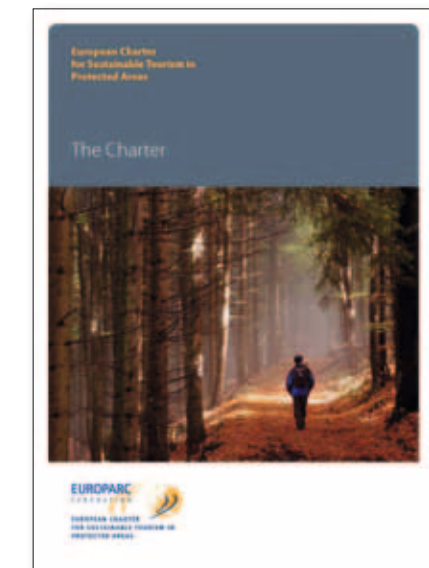
Carefully built from the ground up this Charter explains how to implement the concept of sustainable development in some of Europe's most treasured places. It has grown in two distinct but interlinked areas of development of sustainable tourism: Part I for the protected area and Part II for local tourism businesses. Membership of the EUROPARC Federation is a prerequisite to starting the Charter journey.

The significance of the Charter on a European and Global scale

The European Charter reflects the world-wide and European priorities expressed in the recommendations of Agenda 21 adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 and by the European Union in its 6th Environment Action Programme and Strategy for Sustainable Development. The Charter was one of the priorities defined in the World Conservation Union's action programme for protected areas in Europe, Parks for Life (1994). The growing importance of sustainable tourism development as an area of international concern has been underlined by the recent elaboration of international guidelines for sustainable tourism under the Convention on Biological Diversity. The European Charter directly addresses key principles of these international guidelines, and represents a practical tool for their implementation at the regional level of protected areas.

Morwenna Parkyn, EUROPARC Federation

The text for has been adapted from the brochure 'The Charter' which was edited and designed by EUROPARC Consulting in 2010 and is available from the EUROPARC Federation.



THE CHARTER PRINCIPLES

The Charter principles involve working in partnership, preparing and implementing a strategy, and addressing key issues. A Charter area pledges:

- 1** To involve all those implicated by tourism in and around the protected area in its development and management.
- 2** To prepare and implement a sustainable tourism strategy and action plan for the protected area. The strategy should be based on careful consultation and be approved and understood by local stakeholders.
- 3** To protect and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage, for and through tourism, and to protect it from excessive tourism development by:
 - + Monitoring impact on flora and fauna and controlling tourism in sensitive locations
 - + Encouraging activities, including tourism uses, which support the maintenance of historic heritage, culture and traditions
 - + Controlling and reducing activities, including tourism impacts, which: adversely affect the quality of landscapes, air and water; use non-renewable energy; and create unnecessary waste and noise
- 4** To provide all visitors with a high-quality experience in all aspects of their visit, by:
 - + Researching the expectations and satisfaction of existing and potential visitors
 - + Meeting the special needs of disadvantaged visitors
 - + Supporting initiatives to check and improve the quality of facilities and services



- 5** To communicate effectively to visitors about the special qualities of the area, by:
 - + Ensuring that the promotion of the area is based on authentic images, and is sensitive to needs and capacity at different times and in different locations
 - + Providing readily available and good quality visitor information in and around the area, and assisting tourism enterprises to do so
 - + Providing educational facilities and services that interpret the area's environment and heritage to visitors and local people, including groups and schools
- 6** To encourage specific tourism products which enable discovery and understanding of the area, by:
 - + Providing and supporting activities, events and packages involving the interpretation of nature and heritage
- 7** To increase knowledge of the protected area and sustainability issues amongst tourism stakeholders, by:
 - + Providing or supporting training programmes for staff of the protected area, other organisations and tourism enterprises, based on assessing training needs
- 8** To ensure that tourism supports and does not reduce the quality of life of local residents, by:
 - + Involving local communities in the planning of tourism in the area
 - + Ensuring good communication between the protected area, local people and visitors
 - + Identifying and seeking to reduce any conflicts that may arise
- 9** To increase benefits from tourism to the local economy, by:
 - + Promoting the purchase of local products by visitors and local tourism businesses
 - + Encouraging the employment of local people in tourism
- 10** To monitor and influence visitor flows to reduce negative impacts, by:
 - + Keeping a record of visitor numbers over time and space, including feedback from local tourism enterprises
 - + Creating and implementing a visitor management plan
 - + Promoting use of public transport, cycling and walking as an alternative to private cars
 - + Controlling the siting and style of any new tourism development

Morwenna Parkyn, EUOPARC Federation

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IMPLEMENTING THE CHARTER IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

THE PARKS & BENEFITS PROJECT

PARKS & BENEFITS is a 1st round "Baltic Sea Region Programme" project, running from February 2009 to January 2012. It facilitated international co-operation in all aspects of protected area management using a well-established tool: the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism. Implementing this charter means to find a working consensus with the diverse stakeholder groups – a process that can prove to be very intensive and time consuming. Without guidance, good tools and a common vision it can turn out to be endless.

That is why we involved from the very beginning 8 large protected areas in 6 countries around the Baltic Sea, regional authorities, stakeholders in tourism and environment, and academic institutions. Our partnership was backed by EUROPARC Federation as European umbrella organization.

Together we concentrated our activities at 3 main working fields:

1 Communication and Information

- + Increasing awareness of, and support for, the protected areas of the Baltic Sea Region as fundamental part of its heritage
- + Promotion and marketing for Baltic Sea Region Charter Parks and nature tourism products
- + Communicating the values and benefits of protected areas in the field of tourism to stakeholder groups

2 Baltic Sea Region network of protected areas and regions and sustainable management of natural resources

- + Joint implementation of the European Charter, exchange of experience and expertise
- + Identification and development of eco-tourism products, in line with a Baltic Sea Region quality standard
- + Joint development of a "socio-economic Benefit monitor"
- + Developing a joint guideline how to establish public-private partnership, how to involve tourism SMEs and stakeholders

3 Implementation of European visitor management standard, balancing nature protection and economic utilization

- + Comparative investigations on carrying capacities, visitor management methods, transportation and accessibility
- + Action plans for visitor monitoring and management, low impact transport systems and accessibility
- + Improvement of service quality and staff education
- + Master guide for innovative park-management solutions

Susann Plant, animare projectmanagement

PARTNERS GO FOR THE CHARTER

The quality of the natural environment is increasingly seen as a major attraction by visitors. The many hundreds of nature parks, national parks and other areas in Europe protected for their landscapes and biological diversity provide an amazingly rich resource for tourism. Handled sensitively, this can be a strong force for conservation and sustainable development, generating income for parks and their local communities and awareness and support from visitors and within a wider public arena. On the other hand, pressure from visitors and tourism development can be a threat to protected areas. The challenge is to ensure that tourism in these areas is well managed and sustainable.

The European Charter is a vital and practical tool that supports protected areas of all kinds, as well as local tourism businesses to develop and implement sustainable tourism. It is based on the 10 Charter Principles for sustainable tourism and comprises a set of guidelines, check-lists and methodologies.

The Charter brings participating protected areas:

- + A basis for strengthening relationships with local tourism stakeholders and the wider tourism industry
- + The opportunity to influence tourism development in the area
- + A higher profile in the European arena as an area devoted to sustainable tourism
- + Public relations and awareness-raising opportunities with visitors and local and national media

- + An opportunity to work with and learn from other European "Charter parks" in a network
- + Helpful internal and external assessment, leading to new ideas and improvements
- + Greater credibility amongst potential funding partners

Fundamentally, parks and protected areas which meet the requirements of the Charter will benefit from the economic, social and environmental advantages of well managed, sustainable tourism.

Find out how to become a Charter Park and participate in one of the biggest networks of protected areas in Europe dedicated to sustainable tourism development:
[+ www.european-charter.org](http://www.european-charter.org)

Susann Plant, animare projectmanagement

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WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU

CHARTER PART I – FOR THE PROTECTED AREA

Charter Part I is for individual protected areas of all kinds. Implementation by the protected area authority entails carrying out a diagnosis of the needs of the area (problems and opportunities) recognised and accepted by local partners. The aim of this approach is to find the most appropriate future direction for tourism throughout the whole area. The strategy subsequently proposed by the protected area within the context of the Charter must be developed and implemented in partnership with local tourism representatives, other business sectors, local people and authorities.

The Charter and Sustainable Tourism

Tourism offers a privileged means of raising environmental awareness among the general public. It also represents a valuable opportunity to support traditional economic activities and to improve the quality of life. In order to meet the needs of the protected areas as well as the expectations of European visitors, it is essential that tourism preserves the environment on which its activity is based.

By subscribing to the Charter, the protected area chooses to adopt tourism development that is compatible with the principles of sustainable development. It agrees to favour a coherent approach to projects within its own area and to take a long-term view of the management of the area. The protected area prioritises

co-operation and the sharing of responsibilities in order to improve the effectiveness of its mission to protect the environment.

Benefits of Part I

Fundamentally, protected areas which meet the requirements of the Charter will benefit from the economic, social and environmental advantages of well-managed, sustainable tourism. The Charter also gives participating protected areas:

- + A basis for strengthening relationships with local tourism stakeholders and the wider tourism industry;
- + The opportunity to influence tourism development in the area;
- + A higher profile in the European arena as an area devoted to sustainable tourism;



- + Public-relations and awareness-raising opportunities with visitors and local and national media;
- + An opportunity to work with and learn from other European Charter areas in the Charter network;
- + Helpful internal and external assessment, leading to new ideas and improvements;
- + Greater credibility amongst potential funding partners.

How to gain Charter status

The protected area authority should:

- 1 Accept and abide by the principles for sustainable development as set out in this Charter, whilst adapting them to the local context.

- 2 Involve all those implicated by tourism, in and around the protected area, in its development and management. In order to ensure sustainable tourism development, the protected area will organise public consultation meetings, and will set up a permanent forum or equivalent arrangement between all those directly concerned.

- 3 Define a medium-term strategy (5 years) for sustainable tourism development in its area. The aim of the strategy is to improve the quality of the tourism product while taking into account the conservation and sustainable development objectives of the area. The strategy should be based on careful consultation and be approved and understood by local stakeholders.



Key issues to address

Each protected area is different. Strategic priorities and action programmes should be determined locally, using the participatory approach described above. However, the Charter requires that the following key issues be addressed.

- 1** Protection and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage: A fundamental aim of the strategy and action plan is to protect and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage, for and through tourism, and to protect it from excessive tourism development.
- 2** Improving the quality of the tourism experience: A key goal is to provide all visitors with a high-quality experience in all aspects of their visit. The protected area will carry out a programme with its partners to improve the quality of the tourism which it offers.
- 3** Raising public awareness: The protected area will seek to communicate effectively to visitors about the special qualities of the area.
- 4** Development of tourism specific to the area: The protected area will encourage specific tourism products which enable discovery and understanding of the area, by providing and supporting activities, events and packages involving the interpretation of nature and heritage.

5 Training: Training will be an essential tool for implementing the sustainable tourism development strategy in the area. The aim is to increase knowledge of the protected area and sustainability issues amongst all those involved in tourism.

6 Protection and support of the quality of life for local residents: The tourism strategy will seek to ensure that tourism supports and does not reduce the quality of life of local residents.

7 Social and economic development: The protected area will aim to increase benefits from tourism to the local economy, encouraging initiatives which will have a positive impact on various economic sectors.

8 Control of tourist numbers: Visitor flows will be monitored and influenced to reduce negative impacts on the environment, landscape and heritage of the area.

Ratification

Protected areas which have fulfilled the requirements are invited to apply for recognition by the EUROPARC Federation as a member of the European Charter Network and a "Charter area".

After a protected area has submitted its application it needs to be evaluated and verified. This includes an evaluation visit to the area by an independent sustainable tourism expert appointed by EUROPARC. After that,

the Evaluation Committee for the European Charter will assess the verifier's report to ensure the protected area's commitment to the sustainable tourism development process, its co-operation with local partners, the quality of its strategy and action plan.

Upon successful verification a certificate will be awarded, which is signed by both the authority responsible for managing the protected area and the EUROPARC



Federation. With its signature the protected area reaffirms its commitment to further co-operation with local partners, to implement the agreed strategy and action plan, and to continue striving for excellence in the management of tourism in its region.

Evaluation and renewal

The protected area will monitor and evaluate the results of its strategy. After five years it will submit a detailed report on these to the Evaluation Committee for the European Charter. As part of the process for renewal of Charter membership, usually referred to as "re-evaluation", the protected area will be visited again by a sustainable tourism expert for a re-evaluation of the area's achievements and the efforts being made to reach its fixed objectives.

The procedure for renewing commitment to the Charter will involve development of a new 5-year strategy and action plan. Renewal of the certificate by the EUROPARC Federation will be subject to satisfactory progress over the past five years.

Morwenna Parkyn, EUROPARC Federation

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CHARTER PART II GOES BALTIC – FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES

So far there were only very few protected areas in the Baltic Sea Region that worked with the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (e.g. Nature Park Insel Usedom, Germany and Syöte and Koli National Parks, Finland).

PARKS & BENEFITS opened the door for a significantly higher number and a more systematic approach of implementing the Charter in the Baltic Sea Region.

So far 7 protected areas at least started or finalised their Charter-accreditation-process under PARKS & BENEFITS:

- 1 Dovrefjell Sunndalsfjella National Park, Norway (finalised)
- 2 Müritz National Park, Germany (finalised)
- 3 Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen, Germany
- 4 Ķemeri National Park, Latvia
- 5 Nature Park Maribosøerne, Denmark
- 6 Kurtuvėnai Regional Park, Lithuania
- 7 Žemaitija National Park, Lithuania

EUROPARC's Nordic Baltic Section, which is the umbrella organisation of protected areas in the Scandinavian and Baltic Countries, has been involved in the project's development and the Section's members have discussed general issues of the related methodologies. Also the German Section of the EUROPARC Federation



is linking its work with the Charter. Thus, it can be expected that more protected areas in the whole Baltic Sea Region will start to work with the Charter. This includes the Charter Part II which is especially focussing on the enhancement of cooperation with tourism businesses. Those tourism businesses interested should be encouraged to contact "their" protected area in order to find out about the possibilities of working with the Charter.

However, the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is just at its beginning in the Baltic Sea Region, but it is obvious that this European region has a high potential for sustainable forms of tourism and specifically for nature tourism. The uniqueness of the

Baltic Sea Region can be used for the profiling of tourism products, related to natural and cultural characteristics. From this background, a methodological framework for the implementation of the Charter Part II has been drafted for the area covered by the EUROPARC Nordic Baltic Section. The drafted framework can be downloaded from the Section's website:

> www.europarc-nb.org

There you can find the proposed requirements for parks as well as for tourism businesses along with a Model Partnership Agreement as well as a Model Certificate.

Following this framework, the main conditions of access for tourism businesses and tourism offices or organisations are:

- + location or activities in the Charter Area,
- + compliance with the applicable legislation,

- + provision of a sustainable action plan,
- + demonstration of a positive attitude to environmental management e.g. by using forms of eco-accreditation,
- + membership of the Sustainable Tourism Forum.

The main commitments of tourism business and tourism offices or organisations are:

- + agreement to the sustainable tourism strategy of the respective area,
- + implementation of the sustainable tourism Action Plan,
- + maintenance of an ecolabel or Charter Area Quality Programme,
- + promotion of Protected area information and
- + display of certain logos.

Olaf Ostermann, Ministry for Agriculture, Environment and Consumer Protection Mecklenburg-Vorpommern



HOW TO APPLY AND HOW TO FOLLOW UP

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN PREPARING YOUR APPLICATION?

The application for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism is aimed at protected areas considering the process of certification as a final step in the long-term development of an efficient and trustful cooperation between regional stakeholders and conservationists. Up to this point, a lot of work needs to be done to meet the requirements for a successful award:

- 1** A well-managed and permanent forum for sustainable development of tourism in and around the protected area is essential for an effectively structured process. Since park management authorities face many challenges and regional stakeholders as well as visitors generally have high expectations of the protected areas, the establishment of a forum of regional representatives provides a reliable basis to achieve progress in the development of sustainable tourism and long-term objectives. Experience shows that this way an atmosphere of open-minded, cooperative work can be created. The emphasis is put on continuous public relations for a better understanding of protected areas helping to better communicate the benefits to the local population
- 2** The strategy and action plan are basic tools to succeed in regional tourism development. Both are separate, self-contained documents and should not be included in subordinate reports such as management plans for the protected area to emphasize the

specific role of sustainable tourism and stakeholder involvement. Within the process of preparation, it is often necessary to gain knowledge about trends in tourism and marketing. Therefore, additional services provided by experts to train stakeholders, to mentor the forum or to prepare the strategy are recommended. Depending on the local situation, different options to share responsibilities are possible. In the end, the park management authority together with the forum has to identify necessary measures and decide on priorities. In relation to the regional situation, a sufficient budget and staff has to be provided to secure the fulfilment of the planned actions: In the process of cooperation nothing could be worse than the disappointment of having to give up objectives, which were unrealistic from the outset.

- 3** It is apparent that the nature conservation authority takes action for implementing the Charter principles involving regional partners from the very beginning. With higher awareness for environmental matters in tourism, a wider recognition for sustainable offers in tourism will follow. Therefore, high standards in quality need to be developed further and maintained.



The application report, together with the tourism strategy and the action plan is a key document for the forum as well as for the following assessment by the verifier and the Evaluation Committee. Besides, it shows the record of the mutual work so far. Especially with a time chain for all actions involved, stakeholders and the interested public are able to follow the progress on sustainable tourism development of the region. After five years, it is very useful for the re-evaluation process.

The Müritz National Park registered for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in July 2009 and finished the application process at the end of 2010. Conditions may differ due to specific conditions in each protected area. Thus, there's no way to specify the expenditure of time to prepare a substantial and exact strategy and action plan on the one hand and the need to implement first actions to keep stakeholders committed to the process on the other hand.

Nevertheless, the Charter process is a great way to start the cooperation with local actors, or as in our case, give new impulses 20 years after the establishment of the national park and a growing tourism impact. Finally, after submitting the application, the measures within the action plan will create continuous work on the journey towards a sustainable tourism development in your protected area. But, with the establishment of the regional forum one thing is guaranteed: You'll never walk alone!

Martin Kaiser, Müritz National Park



HOW TO PREPARE FOR A VERIFICATION VISIT

- 1** As soon as the EUROPARC Federation has assigned a verifier for your park, do contact him or her in order to arrange the time of the verification visit as early as possible.
- 2** Make a suggestion for the verifier's agenda for the time of his/her stay in the area as early as possible. Explain for each agenda item in short, what the purpose of the meeting is, visit or review. But keep in mind the following: It is the verifier's task to check

whether the map matches the terrain when it comes to the application, and whether the protected area is able to put the plan for sustainable tourism development into practice.

- 3** Prepare a list with potential interviewees which can be interviewed during the verifier's visit and send this to the verifier together with the above mentioned agenda proposal. Contact the selected interviewers in good time prior to the verifier's visit.
- 4** The agenda of the visit should be according to the verifier's wishes.
- 5** Some advices and tips when preparing the agenda for the verification visit:
 - + Do not use too much time for long lunches and dinners.
 - + Some verifiers want some time for making notes or summing up the impressions during the verification visit.
 - + The verification visit is an evaluation. Do not turn the verification into a fortification visit.
- 6** After the verification visit the verifier will send over the documentation of expenses for both accommodation and travel.
- 7** The verifier will put together the verification report before June 1st and send it to EUROPARC Consulting. After that EUROPARC Consulting prepares all

WHAT COMES AFTER THE CERTIFICATION?

- 1** After the certification it is more important to use the Charter status internally in the park's own administration than using it in marketing: "It is better to regard sustainability as a guiding principle than to communicate that the park works sustainably". It simply is better to be perceived as good than to say that the park is good on sustainable practices.
- 2** When the protected area has received the Charter status the main objective is to implement the action plan in accordance with the overall plan for sustainable tourism development which has a time horizon of 5 years.
- 3** It might be useful to write an internal annual report on the state of fulfilment of the Charter plan.
- 4** The main objective in the fulfilment of the plan is to establish sustainable practice throughout the period of 5 years.
- 5** Sustainable practice in this context refers to the fact that new actions will not be initiated before an analysis of what the measure leads to (e.g. traffic flow impact on the area's carrying capacity) is carried out.



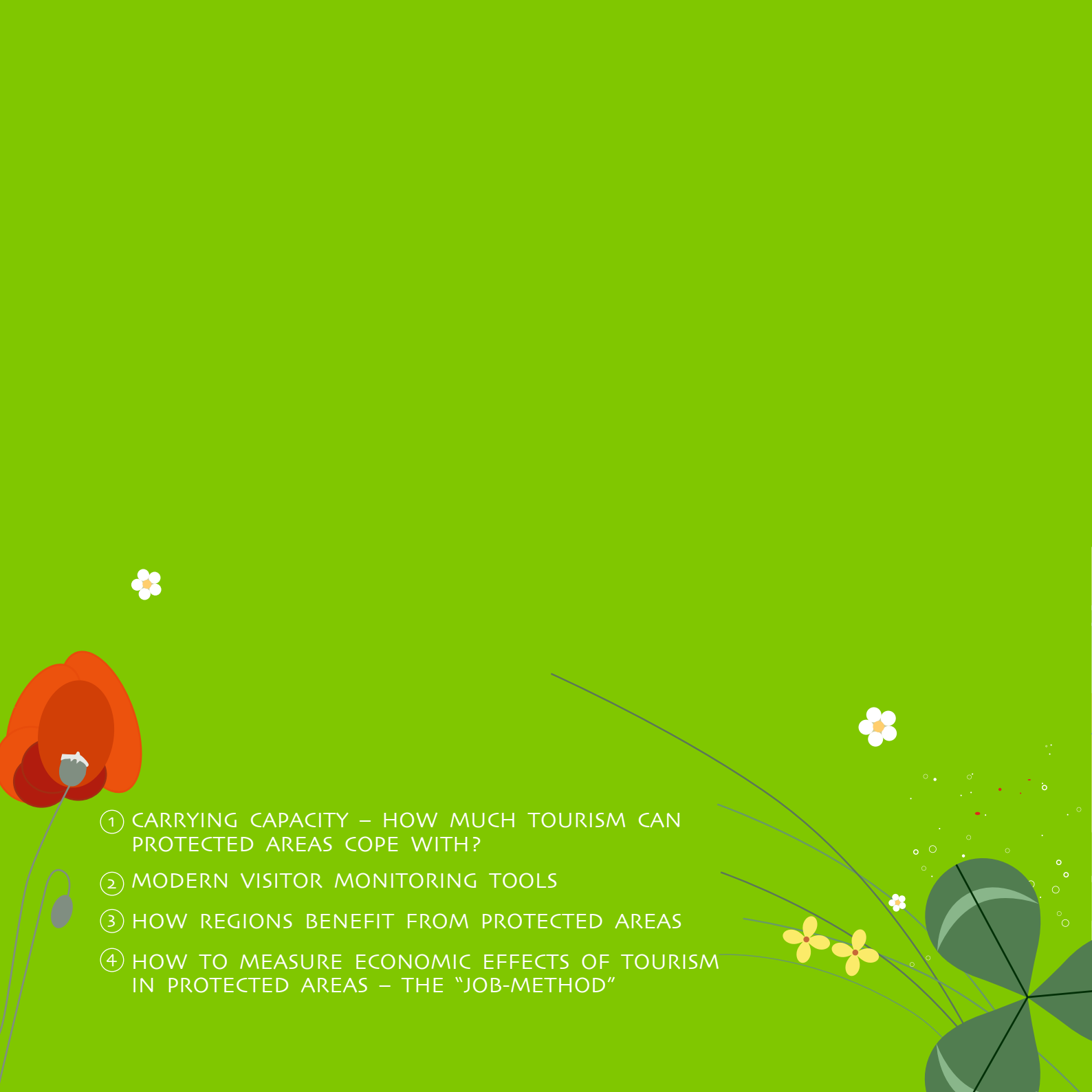
papers forwards them to EUROPARC's independent Evaluation Committee. By the end of June all applicants should have an informal answer from EUROPARC Consulting to be confirmed by a formal letter from the EUROPARC Federation in July. The official awarding of the Charter diplomas will take place at the annual EUROPARC Conference.

Klaas van Ommeren, Dovrefjell Sunndalsfjella National Park

Klaas van Ommeren, Dovrefjell Sunndalsfjella National Park



TOURISM AND NATURE PROTECTION – CONFLICT OR CHANCE?

- 
- ① CARRYING CAPACITY – HOW MUCH TOURISM CAN PROTECTED AREAS COPE WITH?
 - ② MODERN VISITOR MONITORING TOOLS
 - ③ HOW REGIONS BENEFIT FROM PROTECTED AREAS
 - ④ HOW TO MEASURE ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS – THE “JOB-METHOD”



CARRYING CAPACITY – HOW MUCH TOURISM CAN PROTECTED AREAS COPE WITH?

The main challenge for sustainable development of tourism in protected areas is to balance the flow and behaviour of visitors with the protection goals set up for the area at different political levels. This is based on the need to combine protection of nature and cultural resources on the one hand and with the fulfillment of expectations among the visitors to ensure visitor satisfaction on the other hand.

This balancing is in principle related to the work on carrying capacity of the protected area or parts of it. How many tourists can visit a place without threatening the nature resources? How many tourists can be put together before the scenery is spoiled by other visitors? There is no simple and stable answer on these questions that are closely linked both to the concerned nature system, the related social system and the mediating management system that has to ensure the sustainable functionality of the protected area.

Carrying capacities understood as limits or standards not to be exceeded to protect a supporting landscape system are not scientifically determined sizes. They are a result of political decision processes among stakeholders, balancing use and protection preferably based on scientific and/or experiential cognition.

The concept of carrying capacities is not a new invention related to the modern ecological crisis, quite the opposite. It has been known in all stable traditional land use systems and was a central concept in the regulation of the most agricultural systems all over Europe in Medieval

time. In these systems the concept of carrying capacity was established for an optimal use of the production potential, estimated for taxation purposes. The most extensively used agricultural areas, on which the carrying capacity concept was especially widespread as a means for regulation of the common grazing at the so-called commons, often comprise today's main nature conservation areas in Europe. At the same time many historical studies also show that even if such carrying capacity principles for an ecological balanced use of the landscapes have been widely used and explicitly formulated and treated in a more or less democratic process among stakeholders, they did only work, if the overall goal, namely to ensure the long-sighted sustainable use of the landscape, was commonly accepted among the stakeholders. If this was not the case, if the long-sighted protection of the system as the main interrelation between man and nature was neglected in favour of narrow short-term economy or power related considerations, it was not possible to ensure a sustainable land use based on principles of carrying capacity. As a modern study of historical land use systems conclude: Mediation among stakeholders is irrelevant if it is based on ignorance of the integrated character of nature and people.

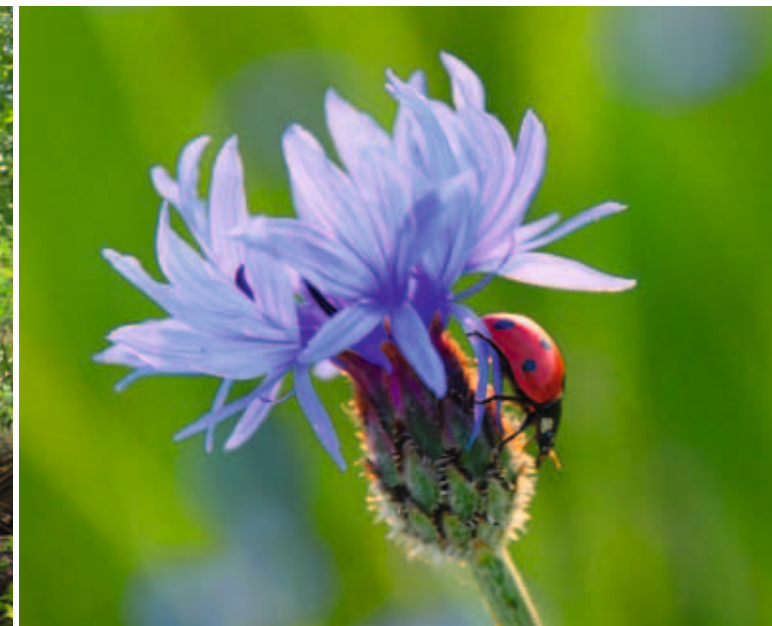
This is the main reason why general models for sustainability of protected areas are so difficult to develop: The variation in interests among stakeholders is considerable. Long-term ecological considerations are not always known or taken into account. The knowledge of the visitor flows and the eventual impacts is often limited. Therefore, a general acceptance of the ecological necessities and

the social practice forming a foundation for a common management of carrying capacities, are seldom realized, although ideologies, concepts and buzzwords on sustainability are often used noncommittally at the political level.

However, a protected area as a landscape designated to fulfill protection purposes by authorities, strongly interested in respecting these goals in the continued cooperation among the relevant local stakeholders, might fulfill the conditions of using carrying capacity as a management instrument, provided that the stakeholders respect the goals too, or that the authorities have means and will to ensure that these goals will be respected among the stakeholders. The growing interest in and pressure on protected areas has promoted experiments, theory and a growing literature on management of carrying capaci-

ties for visitors. Different general methods have been developed, especially in the USA, where the recreation visits to the U.S. national park system has grown from less than 40 million after the Second World War to almost 300 million, producing serious problems both for the protection of the nature resources and for the nature experience delivered by the parks.

A clear result from these studies is that carrying capacity cannot be seen as a one-dimensional instrument. A main problem in the endeavor to cope with the problems has proved to be better integration of the resource dimension, the experiential dimension and the managerial dimension of the carrying capacity that are often handled separately due to scientific and managerial specialization.



The integration is often expressed in a methodological sequence of decisions/actions, starting with

- + the establishment of management objectives/desired conditions and associated indicators and standards, connected to
- + the establishment of a stable monitoring system monitoring a collection of indicator variables, and finally
- + to apply management practices to ensure that standards for the monitoring indicators are maintained.

First, it is necessary to establish management objectives/desired conditions. These are rather broad descriptions of the state and qualities being desired to maintain in and around the park. From this foundation some associated indicators are established, which are more specific, measurable variables, reflecting the essence of or the meaning of the management objectives. From these indicators, some standards, expressing the mini-

mum acceptable values of the indicators are found empirically, typically through observations of nature's reaction on disturbances or other types of influences, or through more or less refined types of interview technique concerning the behavior of the visitors.

An important quality of a good indicator, seen from a management point of view, is that the indicators should be clearly related to visitor use, either in form of

- + level of use,
- + type of use,
- + location of use or
- + behaviour of visitors.

This is important since a major role of indicators is to help determine when management action is needed to control the impacts of visitor use. Thus, there should be a correlation between visitor use and indicator variables.

In relation to the historical experiences of carrying capacities in Europe, it is important to keep in mind that carrying capacity for tourism in protected areas is a matter of visitor flow, not a question of establishing maximal carrying capacities for different types of wildlife in the protected area. Such conditions can certainly form decisive parts of the conservation strategy of the protected area. But they have to be balanced to the parallel effort to optimize visitor satisfaction in a way that does not threaten the protection goals. This is in most cases possible, primarily because there are seldom any direct relations between the overall visitor pressure on a protected area and their impact on the related nature resources.

The varied geographical structure of the protected area (land cover and land use composition, infrastructure, capabilities, accessibility, barriers and information design) can mostly offer strong instruments for a management strategy being oriented towards finding a balance between visitor flow and resource protection.

The pressure from the local and regional population and their activities is very different from park to park. The generally low population and population density within the protected areas involved in the PARKS & BENEFITS project is partly due to the historically extensive land use and related low and dispersed settlement in the protected areas, partly due to the delineation of the parks, as e.g. in Müritz National Park. Here, settlements have been excluded from the park territory, resulting in a very low population and population density. The main exception from this trend is Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen, showing a high population and a population density more than 100, considerably higher than the average of the federal state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern where the park is situated. This certainly reflects the cultural landscape oriented park concept of the Biosphere Reserve, in contrast to the historically more nature conservation oriented National Parks. A similar integrated strategy behind the park concept of Nature Park Maribosørerne also corresponds to the relatively high population density (56) in this park.

The regional population attached to the parks is more diverse. The population within a distance of 50 km from the park comprises from 106.000 inhabitants (Matsalu

National Park in Estonia) to 1.142.000 (Kõmeri National Park in the vicinity of the Latvian capital Riga). The economic activities of this regional population certainly strain the park area and the related nature resources, especially through pollution from agriculture, forestry, industry or transport, however only in a limited degree since most of these activities are located at a certain distance from the park. The regional population forms additionally an important part of the market for the recreational and settlement attractions, set up by the park, playing a basic role for the park in the strategy to ensure a stable economy and local and regional political backing.

If the regional population is related to the land acreage (excluding water bodies) of the protected areas, an interesting pattern shows up: Except for Matsalu National Park and Dovrefjell Sunndalsfjella National Park there is a high potential of more than 2.000 regional visitors per square km for the parks, independently of their location related to major urban areas (see table 1 on page 30).

For the assessment of the potential recreational visitors to the park the number of tourists coming from outside the region has to be added. Estimates of the yearly number of visitors (divided into day and overnight visitors), the tourist capacity in form over overnight stay ('beds') capacities (including camping site capacities) within 5 km from the park and the number of yearly park-related overnight stays within this capacity have been estimated by the park authorities (see table 2 on page 31).



TABLE 1 POPULATION WITHIN AND AROUND THE 8 PROTECTED AREAS

	DOVREFJELL SUNNDALS- FJELLA NATIONAL PARK NORWAY	NATURE PARK MARIBOSØERNE DENMARK	MÜRITZ NATIONAL PARK GERMANY	BIOSPHERE RESERVE SOUTHEAST-RÜGEN GERMANY	ŽEMAITIJA NATIONAL PARK LITHUANIA	MATSALU NATIONAL PARK ESTONIA	ĶEMERI NATIONAL PARK LATVIA	KURTUVĒNAI REGIONAL PARK LITHUANIA
Size of the Park (in km²)	1.706	47	327	228	209	501	385	189
Land area of the park (excluding water bodies)	1.663	36	291	115	193	216	340	183
Population within the park, in 1.000	4	2	2	12	6	1	7	3
Density of population within the land area of the park (inhabitants per square kilometre land area)	2	56	7	104	31	5	21	16
Population within 50 km from the park ('Regional inhabitants'), in 1.000	6	191	676	395	484	106	1.142	456
Potential density of regional visitors of the park (regional inhabitants per square kilometre land area)	4	5.306	2.323	3.435	2.508	491	3.359	2.492
Potential density of regional visitors if 1% of the regional population visits the park at the same time	0	53	23	34	25	5	34	25

Source: The delineation of the parks made for the calculation of their size have been made by Roskilde University based on various map information from the parks. Population figures are based on distribution of population from EUROSTAT according to the CORINE land cover classification. For Dovrefjell, the population is estimated based on information from Statistics Norway. Despite some marked differences to local estimations (often related to a high density of summerhouses in the areas) the CORINE based estimation is used to ensure regional comparability.

TABLE 2 ESTIMATIONS OF VISITORS AND OVERNIGHT STAY CAPACITY

	DOVREFJELL SUNNDALS- FJELLA NATIONAL PARK NORWAY	NATURE PARK MARIBOSØERNE DENMARK	MÜRITZ NATIONAL PARK GERMANY	BIOSPHERE RESERVE SOUTHEAST-RÜGEN GERMANY	ŽEMAITIJA NATIONAL PARK LITHUANIA	MATSALU NATIONAL PARK ESTONIA	ĶEMERI NATIONAL PARK LATVIA	KURTUVĒNAI REGIONAL PARK LITHUANIA
Estimated number of day tourists per year (in 1.000)	15	8	35	500	80	15	45	120
Estimated number of overnight tourists (guest-arrivals) per year (in 1.000)	5	7	340	390	40	5	15	13
Estimated number of visitors per year (in 1.000)	20	15	375	900	120	20	60	133
Number of accommodation spaces within the park	-	997	15	19.600	1.000	62	900	1.105
Number of accommodation spaces within 5 km from the park (including the park)	11.430	1.471	100	34.000	1.000	112	1.830	1.400
Number of guest overnight stays per year (in 1.000)	17	34	1.626	2.141	48	10	135	15
Average number of overnight stays per overnight tourists	3,4	4,9	4,8	5,5	1,2	2,0	9,0	1,2
Estimated number of day tourists per square km land and year	12,0	222,2	120,3	4.347,8	414,5	69,4	132,4	655,7
Estimated number of overnight tourists (guest-arrivals) per square km land and year	3,0	194,4	1.168,4	3.391,3	207,3	23,1	44,1	71,0

Source: Estimations from the following informants from park authorities or other local experts: Klaas van Ommeren, Dovrefjell Sunndalsfjella National Park; Vita Caune, Ķemeri National Park; Stefan Woidig, Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen; Jurgita Bartkuvienė, Kurtuvėnai Regional Park; Uffe Nielsen, Nature Park Maribosøerne; Nele Söber, Estonian Environmental Board; Martin Kaiser, Müritz National Park and Austra Brazdeikyte, Žemaitija National Park.



The estimated number of yearly visitors differ from 15.000 in Nature Park Maribosøerne to 900.000 in Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen. The division into day tourists and overnight tourist is very different: In half of the parks (Dovrefjell, Kemer, Matsalu and Žemaitija) the number of day tourists is estimated to be two to three times the number of overnight tourists, whereas the vast majority of visitors in Müritz National Park are considered overnight tourists. There is no correlation between the number of day tourists and the number of inhabitants within 50 km from the park. A surprisingly large part of the overnight accommodation spaces is located within the parks, but for some (national) parks accommodation facilities in the vicinity of the park are of main importance. Large variations in the number of nights per overnight tourists (from 1.2 to 9.0) indicate very different visitor types, but might also indicate some errors or methodological discrepancies in the estimations.

To compare the general pressure of the tourism on the land territory of the protected areas the available data has been transformed to comparable densities per square kilometer land area within the parks. Here, enormous differences in visitor and potential visitor density turns up: From 15 yearly visitors per square kilometer land in Dovrefjell Sunndalsfjella National Park to almost 8.000 yearly visitors per square kilometer land in Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen. Also very different densities of accommodation spaces are shown.

From these figures it seems clear that a carrying capacity for tourists in protected areas cannot be estimated (and therefore negotiated in a qualified way) at a general level of overall visitor density.



TABLE 3

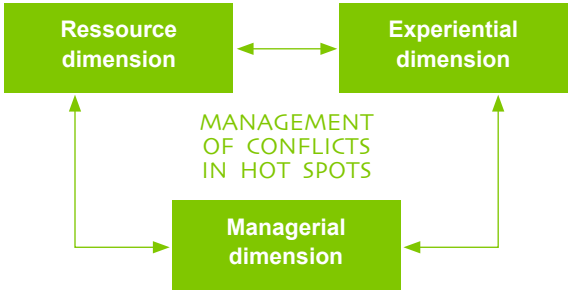
ESTIMATIONS OF DENSITIES OF VISITORS AND OVERNIGHT STAY CAPACITY

	DOVREFJELL SUNNDALS-FJELLA NATIONAL PARK NORWAY	NATURE PARK MARIBOSØERNE DENMARK	MÜRITZ NATIONAL PARK GERMANY	BIOSPHERE RESERVE SOUTHEAST-RÜGEN GERMANY	ŽEMAITIJA NATIONAL PARK LITHUANIA	MATSALU NATIONAL PARK ESTONIA	KEMERI NATIONAL PARK LATVIA	KURTUVĖNAI REGIONAL PARK LITHUANIA
Estimated number of visitors per square km land and year	15,0	416,7	1.288,7	7.826,1	621,8	92,6	176,5	726,8
Number of accommodation spaces per square km land within the park		27,7	0,1	170,4	5,2	0,3	2,6	6,0
Number of accommodation spaces per square km land within 5 km from the park (including the park)	6,9	40,9	0,3	295,7	5,2	0,5	5,4	7,7
Number of guest overnight stays per square km land and year	10,2	944,4	5.587,6	18.617,4	248,7	46,3	397,1	82,0

Source: All figures are based on a combination of data from Table 1 and 2



Carrying capacity has obviously to be specified in much more detail as a concrete relation between specific protection goals set up for the single local hot spots of parks, consideration of other relevant stakeholder interests and the management opportunities and capacities concerning regulation of the visitor flow. The integration of the resource dimension, the experience dimension and the management dimension has first of all to be related to different types of local hot spots (or local conflict management areas), and then coordinated at a higher park level.



At European level, a lot of potential local hot spots have been designated within all the parks in form of Natura 2000 sites and related areas of listed habitat types and species. In most of the 7 protected areas of PARKS &

BENEFITS located in the European Union, the Natura 2000 sites cover the vast majority of the park territories, and within these sites there might be several hundreds of small areas of listed habitat sites in each park, all of them presenting a potential nature hot spot. Of the 231 listed habitat types to be protected, defined in the EU Habitat Directive, 55 are to be found within at least one of the 7 parks.

A detailed study of the accessibility of the all in all 226 of such areas representing 16 different listed habitat types in the Natura 2000 site of Nature Park Maribosøerne in Denmark made in the summer 2011 shows that most of these areas are in practice not accessible for the public (although they certainly can be threatened by other impacts). One of the most important means for visitor regulation to protect the nature resources in such areas seems to be a wise planning and management of hiking and biking tracks, combining the opportunities for the attraction to exiting nature experiences with an efficient distraction from selected fragile habitats.

A regularly standardized visitor monitoring system that can be linked to indicators and standards for local hot spots and their connection routes to major visitor entrances is the main condition for the efficient use of visitor carrying capacity as an instrument for the management of tourism in protected areas.

Such integrated monitoring systems are not systematically included in the management of European protected areas today. For the exchange of experience in this direction the PARKS & BENEFITS project has collected

descriptions of examples of the management of the main conflict areas of the parks. This exercise showed clearly how the parks are dealing with a lot of visitor-oriented problems, both concerning conflicts between visitors and the nature resources to be protected (man-nature conflicts), but also conflicts related to the growing number of visitors and between different types of users (man-man conflicts).

Jesper Brandt, University of Roskilde

AN OVERVIEW OF CARRYING CAPACITY PROBLEMS IN THE 8 PARKS								
	DOVREFJELL SUNNDALS- FJELLA NATIONAL PARK NORWAY	NATURE PARK MARIBOSØERNE DENMARK	MÜRTZ NATIONAL PARK GERMANY	BIOSPHERE RESERVE SOUTHEAST-RÜGEN GERMANY	ŽEMAITIJA NATIONAL PARK LITHUANIA	MATSALU NATIONAL PARK ESTONIA	ĶEMERI NATIONAL PARK LATVIA	KURTUVĖNAI REGIONAL PARK LITHUANIA
Examples of hot spots (conflicts) described	1	5	3	4	-	2	3	-
Division into man-nature conflict	1	2	1	3	0	1	2	-
Division into man-man conflict	0	3	2	1	0	1	1	-

Source: Based on a summary of presentations of Carrying Capacities of the parks of PARKS & BENEFITS, made by Olaf Ostermann, at the meeting of PARKS & BENEFITS in Haapsalu, Estonia, October 2010. See also Jesper Brandt and Esbern Holmes: Conditions for the management of carrying capacity in the parks of PARKS & BENEFITS. Roskilde University, June 2011.



AN OVERVIEW OF CARRYING CAPACITY PROBLEMS IN THE 8 PARKS		
PROTECTED AREA	MOST IMPORTANT CONFLICT(S)	HOW HAVE CC CONFLICTS BEEN REGISTERED/PRESENTED?
DOVREFJELL SUNNDALSFJELLA NATIONAL PARK NORWAY	Rendeeer carving area at Kongsvoll	Parliament decision/Research programmes
NATURE PARK MARIBOSØERNE DENMARK	Fishing, sailing /waterbirds	Government decision /vulnerability plan at county level
MÜRITZ NATIONAL PARK GERMANY	Cycle path; crane-watching; canoe-route	Agreement with national park guides; Delphi-method
BIOSPHERE RESERVE SOUTHEAST-RÜGEN GERMANY	Man-nature: Greifswalder Bodden (fishing, water tourism /birds) man-man: traffic	Participatory process
ŽEMAITIJA NATIONAL PARK LITHUANIA	(Recreation)	-
MATSALU NATIONAL PARK ESTONIA	Traffic: dust; people on private land; people/ dogs	Management plan
ĶEMERI NATIONAL PARK LATVIA	Coastal forests; trampling and littering; fire, erosions	-
KURTUVĖNAI REGIONAL PARK LITHUANIA	-	-

Source: Based on a summary of presentations of Carrying Capacities of the parks of PARKS & BENEFITS, made by Olaf Ostermann, at the meeting of PARKS & BENEFITS in Haapsalu, Estonia, October 2010. See also Jesper Brandt and Esbern Holmes: Conditions for the management of carrying capacity in the parks of PARKS & BENEFITS. Roskilde University, June 2011.

AN OVERVIEW OF CARRYING CAPACITY PROBLEMS IN THE 8 PARKS		
PROTECTED AREA	EXAMPLES OF RELATED INDICATORS AND STANDARDS	HOW IS CARRYING CAPACITY MANAGED?
DOVREFJELL SUNNDALSFJELLA NATIONAL PARK NORWAY	Spatial behaviour of reindeer vs. spatial behaviour of visitors	Removal of military sites, removal of roads; intensive monitoring
NATURE PARK MARIBOSØERNE DENMARK	Restrictions in zones	Control of restrictions
MÜRITZ NATIONAL PARK GERMANY	Max. group size (25); max. visitors per evening (160)	Evaluation before and after crane season
BIOSPHERE RESERVE SOUTHEAST-RÜGEN GERMANY	Number of fishermen/ fishing-pikes; restrictions in zones	Man-nature conflicts: Common agree-ments (except for some marine areas); Man-man conflicts: No agreement Monitoring
ŽEMAITIJA NATIONAL PARK LITHUANIA	Restrictions in zones	Control of zonation
MATSALU NATIONAL PARK ESTONIA	-	Communication
ĶEMERI NATIONAL PARK LATVIA	Vegetation cover; number of fires	Parking fees; wooden paths
KURTUVĖNAI REGIONAL PARK LITHUANIA	-	-

Source: Based on a summary of presentations of Carrying Capacities of the parks of PARKS & BENEFITS, made by Olaf Ostermann, at the meeting of PARKS & BENEFITS in Haapsalu, Estonia, October 2010. See also Jesper Brandt and Esbern Holmes: Conditions for the management of carrying capacity in the parks of PARKS & BENEFITS. Roskilde University, June 2011.



VISITOR MANAGEMENT IN HOT SPOTS OF THE DOVREFJELL SUNNDALSFJELLA NATIONAL PARK IN NORWAY

The main objectives for visitor management in the Dovrefjell Sunndalsfjella National Park area are:

- + To preserve an almost intact mountain eco system taking care of the wild reindeer as the most important issue
- + To preserve the cultural landscapes of the area
- + To preserve the geology as well as the scenery of the area
- + To facilitate simple outdoor life without any heavy infrastructure

In this context a hotspot refers to areas within the national park area where causes of action may impair or even be in conflict with the conservational goals the park is meant to protect.

Monitoring as a tool was introduced already in 2006 and is gradually implemented by

- + Monitoring of the behaviour of the wild reindeer
- + Visitor monitoring
- + The use of raptors
- + The use of small rodents

The objective is to give a most accurate picture of the usage patterns within the Dovrefjell Sunndalsfjella National Park and surrounding protected areas with a special emphasis on the area near Mount Snøhetta and the areas which seem to be most affected by tourist traffic.

Self-register boxes (filling out a questionnaire on a voluntary basis) and IR-counters will provide a good overview of the visitor flow from the main gateways into the park as well as along the main routes.

IR-counters are used in order to provide

- + A good and high resolution picture of the visitor traffic patterns in the area.
- + A good measure of the actual fraction of visitors answering the questionnaire.

The answers provided in the questionnaire enable the park to draw both planned as well as real trips on the map in order to quantify the visitor flow in numbers, geographically and in time to get knowledge of the dispersal of visitors between the registration points.

The visitors are asked to provide information on her/his use of the area and about him/herself in terms of duration of the trip, scope of the trip, their contact information, nationality, if they are following the marked trails in the area or not.

By 2009 more than 4.000 questionnaires were filled in. The respondents' mail addresses that were collected thereby allow the park administration to follow up on respondents at a later date. By mapping all behavioral patterns it is further possible to define specific geographical focus areas.

The big picture based on the different types of monitoring shows the following:

- + The total number of visitors to the area is approximately 20.000 per year. That means that almost every 5th visitor stops and fills out the questionnaire.
- + Ca. 25% of all visitors entered the park area at the gateway Kongsvold. The number of visitors entering the area from other gateways was measured as well. It is now possible to focus on three other gateways which seem to be important for the various tourist flows in the area.

The big picture produced from both the mentioned types of monitoring and a guest survey in 2008 has been of great interest so far:

- + The numbers from the guest survey from 2008 describe about the same patterns of behavior as the results from the different types of monitoring.
- + The results from the guest survey show about the same numbers of visitors as the results from monitoring.
- + But the guest survey provided valuable additional information about the length of stay in the area. According to this 75 % of all visitors are day visitors.

Klaas van Ommeren, Dovrefjell Sunndalsfjella National Park



VISITOR MANAGEMENT IN HOT SPOTS OF THE MÜRITZ NATIONAL PARK IN GERMANY

With tourism use and its impacts on protected areas there is most often the need to regulate the amount and activities of visitors to avoid threats on endangered habitats and species. In worst cases, e.g. in some mass tourism destinations, it involves not only threats for nature, but guests can also disturb each other. In the end, tourism offers become less attractive. To solve this conflict the scientific research continues to raise the question of carrying capacity of protected areas. One of the most active researchers dealing with the dramatic increase of visitors in the US National Park system is Robert Manning, who has made the most of his experiences back in the 1960s. Together with the American biologist Garreth Hardin, who declared 1968 the “Tragedy of the commons”, it was argued that the advantage of an increased use of the common will be profited by the individual user, but the disadvantages in form of a declining carrying capacity will be shared by the community. As a result, there is a trend towards a steady undermining of the system through overexploitation which could threaten especially protected areas.

The discussion was an impulse for scientific research on models for a carrying capacity of biotopes, even up to a larger scale like parks. But after 30 years of research on carrying capacity, the American scientist Glenn E. Haas asserted in 2001 that the fundamental question of past years still remains: how do environmentalists decide

upon a numeric visitor capacity? If there are negative impacts on nature habitats by tourism, efficient, reliable and low cost measures are needed in protected areas’ daily work to avoid further damage. Comprehensive surveys are usually expensive and can scarcely be implemented as the authorities often lack adequate budget.

In Müritz National Park, three visitor hot spots exist. For the first, Lake Müritz cycle path, there is no general solution for occasional men-men disturbances between cyclists and hikers using the same trail. Seasonal peaks are up to 1.500 guests per day with the majority of cyclists bothering hikers with bells and high-speed on the 2.5 meter narrow trail. Threats on nature haven’t been examined yet. However, the trail leads about 6 km through a peat bog, so the risk of visitors leaving the marked trail is very low. Further, there is no other possibility to guide visitors on an alternative trail in the area.

Compared to this, the establishment of a visitor limitation in 2003 to protect the annual crane gathering at the Lake Rederang is a successful example of a management measure. Before that, many bird watching visitors disturbed the cranes each autumn (noise/colourful clothing) which rested with a maximum of 8.000 birds in the evening hours at the lakeshore. Subsequently, the birds diverged to other areas and visitors started to complain. In 2003 the so called “crane-ticket” was introduced to the park area. From now on a maximum capacity of 160 guests per evening accompanied by local guides was allowed to visit the resting spots. This mean, each visitor has to participate in a guided tour with a fee of 7 € per

person (inclusive bus-shuttle) to be able to watch the birds from the end of August till the end of October. The organisation of this tourism offer with up to 3.000 sold tickets per season is implemented by a private company, contracted through the National Park authority. In addition the control of the regulation is secured by National Park rangers. Today, the crane watching has become an exclusive event in the late autumn season – the majority of visitors is highly satisfied being part of an outstanding nature experience.

The third example is the canoeing route on Havel River leading 23 km though the national park area. Especially with seasonal peaks in summer and two German bank holidays in spring, the capacity of visitors on some sections of the route was exceeded. This was determined by monitoring the boats and counting canoeists and stakeholders. To find a carrying capacity and prevent over-exploitation, the Delphi Method was adopted. This systematic forecasting method is based on an anonymous questionnaire to avoid false results influenced by opinion-leaders. In three rounds, representative experts with relevance to the canoeing route issue estimated a maximum boat amount and additionally reasoned why their specified amount would help to solve the visitor crowding. Up to now, the average value for a maximum boat amount on the Havel River is not implemented yet, but a common basis for a limitation was developed in case of overuse in the future.

Martin Kaiser, Müritz National Park



FOR EVERY COMPLEX PROBLEM, THERE IS AN ANSWER THAT IS CLEAR, SIMPLE – AND WRONG.

H.L. Mencken (1880 – 1956), American Journalist



MODERN VISITOR MONITORING TOOLS



PURPOSE OF AND DEMANDS ON MEASURING VISITOR FLOW

Monitoring has a quite long tradition in protected areas concentrating mainly on observing and managing the natural environment. But increasing visitor numbers and public accountability lead parks to implement more and more visitor monitoring systems. With ICT-solutions on the rise the disadvantages of hand-made counting can be solved and the management of visitor flows can be organised more effectively.

Purpose of data gathering through visitor monitoring

- + Definition of hot spots and collection of arguments for restrictions
- + Effective management of visitor flows for a better protection of sensitive areas and better quality of experience

- + Better integration of visitor monitoring into planning processes (e.g. visitor management)
- + Better planning and management of infrastructure, thus raising the quality of tourism offers
- + Awareness raising of values of protected areas
- + Obtaining additional service providers that can help in maintaining nature trails/infrastructure
- + Attracting more funding for infrastructure
- + Planning aid for SMEs: development of products at places where there is a demand and possibility

Demands on visitor monitoring methods

- + Count traffic flows and visitors (how many and where)
- + Estimation visitor amounts in natural environment/ outdoors
- + Count visitors at 12 – 15 locations/ 15 days per year
- + Count visitors at main trails and towers (capacity issues)

- + Count visitors at national park information centres
- + Generate quantitative data as base to develop a database for visitor management
- + Analysed of data should be comparable among protected areas
- + Received data/analysis must be useful for future actions (durability!)

The following characteristics have been defined as core criteria when implementing ICT-visitor monitoring solutions by the 8 PARKS & BENEFITS partner parks. They should:

- + Be able to count hikers, cyclists and canoeists
- + Have an easy and transferable software
- + Not be too expensive
- + Have strong power supply
- + Have a long battery life
- + Be easy to maintain
- + Have low maintenance costs
- + Be easy to get and analyse the data
- + Be easy to hide outdoors
- + Make the analysed data comparable
- + Be reliable
- + Be vandalism-proofed
- + Be as accurate as possible
- + Have a long lifespan
- + Be weather-proofed all year round
- + Be user-friendly

Romy Sommer, animare projectmanagement

IT-BASED VISITOR MONITORING IN THE MATSALU NATIONAL PARK, ESTONIA

Various institutions in Estonia have partially implemented visitor monitoring methods, but by and large the comprehensive monitoring system is still lacking. The State Forest Management Centre is using the most systematically developed visitor monitoring in protected areas since 2002 (starting with recreative environmental impact researches) according to the methodological manual "Visitor monitoring in nature areas – a manual based on experiences from the Nordic and Baltic countries".

The monitoring results allow better management decisions and optimize the usage of resources. Different models in organizing visitor management in protected areas are available which help to estimate and plan the capacity of certain areas. They are:

- + ROS – The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
- + VAMP – Visitor Activity Management Process
- + VIM – Visitor Impact Management
- + LAC – Limits of Acceptable Change
- + VERP – Visitor Experience Resource Protection
- + TOMM – Tourism Optimization Management Model
- + Also ECOS – ecotourism opportunity spectrum and PAVIM – Protected Area Visitor Impact Management

The objective is to create simple, cost-effective and applicable visitor carrying capacity monitoring methodology to test and implement it at local level. The methodology



applied should consider protection objectives, protection management plans, the ecosystem and biome carrying capacity, tourism flows and its influence on protected areas' biological diversity.

The modules of visitor monitoring include counting, carrying capacity monitoring and visitor surveys in order to get a complete visitor monitoring system by connecting different monitoring methods, researches and technical solutions. Protected areas should consider why they need a carrying capacity management and where it should be implemented – then they can decide on the visitor counting technology. And keep in mind that not all protected areas should be visitor-monitored as some are inaccessible, unknown or unpopular. Where there are less visitors, there is no sense in organizing visitor monitoring. Also financial resources to carry out the monitoring are limited. Protected areas should therefore prioritize areas to be monitored. According to this, partial visitor monitoring should be carried out in all Estonian national parks. Continuous data collection is essential as it helps to better understand visitors and to better meet their needs. Reliable data also improves the integration into protected area activities.

You should also consider whether you want to focus on the physical carrying capacity, real carrying capacity, economical carrying capacity, ecological carrying capacity or social carrying capacity.

Metsähallitus suggests to use the following equation (in order to reach visitor whole amount):

$$N = n * CF * ACF$$

N: number of visitors in the whole area during 1 day
n: number of visitors according to the counter data
cf: counter correction multiplier
Acf: area's correction multiplier

This is an equation for one counter. If you install multiple counters, you need to count the visitors in total as an average of all counter data generated.

The spot to monitor should be:

- + Developed for nature tourism or nature education or is under development;
- + Where it is possible to implement the visitor gate principle;
- + Where capacity issues and nature disconcertion are already known;
- + Where there are special circumstances to accept, inform and guide visitors.



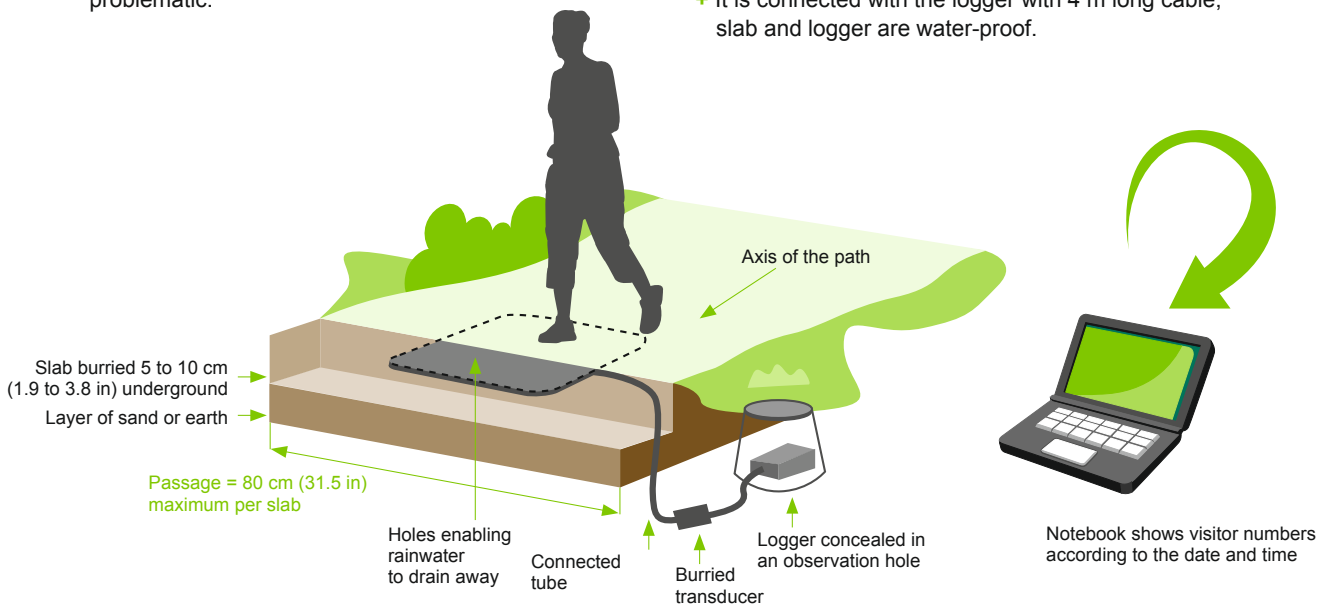
In the frame of the PARKS & BENEFITS project the Environmental Board decided to implement the Eco Counter slab counter. The strengths and weaknesses of these seismic and vibration responsive devices are listed in the following:

Strengths: easy to hide, weatherproof, low energy usage, possible to receive time and date specific data, no need for supporting structures, possible to install under ground.

Weaknesses: type, density and freezing of the soil, burial depth and intensity of the step-on (weight) may influence response. Counting groups may be problematic.

The main characteristics of the Eco Counter acoustic slab (bluetooth) are summarized:

- + It identifies stepping on the slab by registering pressure difference.
- + Built-in timer helps to avoid double counting in case a person steps on with both legs.
- + Manufacturer estimates accuracy +/-5%.
- + It is applicable for counting people as well as bicycles.
- + Minimal pressure that can be registered is 4,5 kg.
- + Kit consists of the slab and logger.
- + Usage of the product is considered between temperature -40°C ...+60°C
- + It is connected with the logger with 4 m long cable; slab and logger are water-proof.



- + Logger battery lifetime is 10 years.
- + Bluetooth logger is accessible with notebook.
- + The slab is 50 x 60 cm and 1,6 cm thick and is buried under ground 5–10 cm deep.
- + Logger can also be buried or hidden so it is not visible but can be accessed easily when receiving data from the logger display.
- + 50 x 60 cm slabs is suggested to be used with 80 cm wide trails. When the trail is wider, use bigger slabs or use several slabs side-by-side.
- + Slab should be installed in natural or artificial bottle necks, where a person is forced to step on the slab while going along the trail.
- + Slab advantage is the hiding possibility, which helps to avoid vandalism and deliberate data contorting. But detracting is inaccurate counting (when a group comes).
- + As netconnection is missing, data receiving must be regularly.
- + Slabs may not work during winter as the ground is frozen and pressure will not reach the slab.
- + During winter it is suggested to check if the slab has not arisen and during heavy rains to check if the slab is still there or has it been flushed away especially after the slab has been installed and the soil on top of the slab has not been tickened.

Nele Söber, Environmental Board

Research made by Estonian University of Life Science in the frame of Environmental Investment Centre project "Estimating the visitor capacity in protected areas" to regulate visitor management initiatives and visitor activities management in Environmental Board. Research was carried out during 2010 – 2011.

IT-BASED VISITOR MONITORING IN THE NATURE PARK MARIBOSØERNE, DENMARK

How many people do actually visit the Nature Park Maribosøerne? Hard to say, because the nature park is situated next to the town of Maribo (6.000 inhabitants) and has many small access roads. However, park managers should have a clear picture of the visitor flows in the area when planning and maintaining the nature park. Politicians do also ask for information on numbers when resources are allocated to the park.



During the project period a visitor monitoring system has been set up. People will be counted at 5 places with electronic counters. These have been established, hidden in boxes, at important visitor points within the park. The counters supplement other figures such as number of cycles rented out, number of fishing licenses sold, number of participants on guided tours, number of guests on the tour boat, number of visitors at the Open Air Museum, overnight stays at hotels and hostels. All these figures will altogether contribute to the one big picture of visitor flows within the park area.

The electronic counters count when an electronic beam is broken and a person passes the counter. To reduce the risk of non-counting when e.g. a group is passing, the counters are set up on trails and accesses to bird towers, on a walking bridge or a similar narrow passage. Generally, it might be necessary to adjust the numbers by supplementing them with direct observations of people passing a certain counter. For each counter a correction factor must be defined.

In Nature Park Maribosøerne a general assessment of the vulnerability of the nature has been made. This has been done for all rare and important species of wild plants and animals as well as habitats of high value. The park has created the outset for a visitor management plan, including a map with the following categories:

- 1 No access.
- 2 Access only for guided groups (including tour boat).

- 3 Access on specific time of the year, for example outside the breeding season.
- 4 Access restricted to certain roads, paths or sailing routes.
- 5 Access at specific time of the day.
- 6 Access is generally open. Some of these categories can also be combined.

It is important for the landowners, especially if the park is on private land, that the park managers can comply with their fears of having people disturbing sensitive places harming nature and reducing the value of hunting rights. With a visitor survey system in place that is combined with a visitor management plan, it is easier to convince and involve the landowners into the management. For the same reason the landowners had their say before the plan was finalized. Instead of putting up a lot of signs saying "no entry", the basic idea is to guide visitors by signs, maps, posters, picnic areas, observation towers and paths. So far this has been a success story.

Up till now 15.000 visitors per year have been estimated by the University of Roskilde. However, this refers to the time before the monitoring system was in place and could easily be too low. The new monitoring system will provide new and more accurate figures.

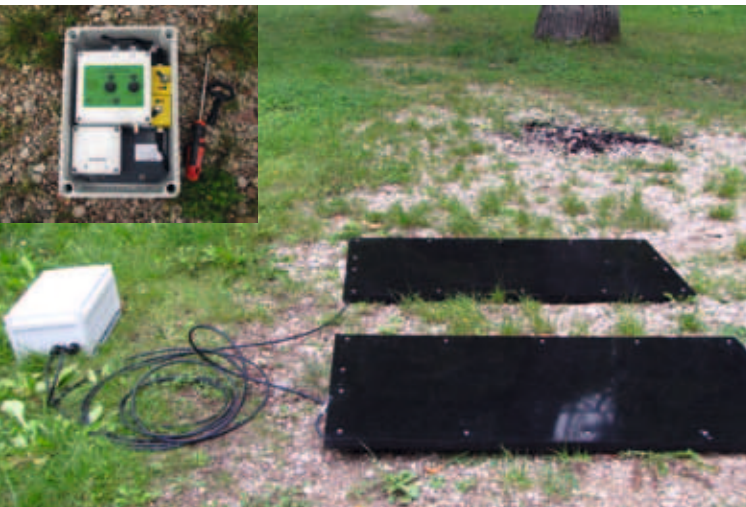
Jan Woolhead, Region Zealand



IT-BASED VISITOR MONITORING IN ĶEMERI NATIONAL PARK, LATVIA

Ķemeri National Park is a challenging area for visitor monitoring and management as it is situated close to two large cities – Riga and Jurmala – and is easily accessible by a wide network of roads and by railroad.

Digital visitor counters are considered the most precise method of visitor counting and are recommended for protected nature areas (Kajala 2007)*. There has been little experience in IT based visitor monitoring in Latvia. Up until 2010 only two digital visitor counters have been installed in protected areas.



Within PARKS & BENEFITS project Ķemeri National Park has purchased five digital visitor counters. Three counters are used for counting visitors at the main tourist attractions. Two are used for survey on carrying capacity of coastal pine forests.

Due to the high risk of vandalism we have chosen counters that can be completely hidden in the ground (Step pressure pad counter by A&P Chambers Ltd.) or behind thin layers of wood or plastic (Radio Beam People Counter RBX7 by A&P Chambers Ltd.).

Data gathered from the counters situated at the main tourism attractions give precise information on the use of nature trails that is important for management of infrastructure and visitor flows. The data also contribute towards estimation of total annual number of visitors in the national park.

Digital visitor counters that are used for survey on carrying capacity are installed next to the vegetation sampling plots, where the effects of trampling are being monitored. Although the number, models and setting of digital visitor counters depend on the characteristics of each protected area, each successful example of visitor monitoring can be used by other protected areas in BSR.

Vita Caune, Nature Protection Agency – Ķemeri National Park Administration

*Kajala, L. (Ed.) 2007. Visitor monitoring in nature areas – a manual based on experience from the Nordic and Baltic Countries. TemaNord 2007:534

IT-BASED VISITOR MONITORING IN THE ŽEMAITJA NATIONAL PARK, LITHUANIA

Žemaitija National Park is one of 5 national parks in Lithuania. But more than 130.000 tourists per year make this place one of the most popular holiday's destination in Lithuania.

When talking about visits – only the number of overnight stays and museum visits is actually known. To generate a total number of visits is very difficult because of the people living inside the area and the specifics of the national monitoring plan which is mandatory for all Lithuanian protected areas.



In Žemaitija National Park two digital counters were purchased to make the monitoring more precise. In future the eco-combo counter will be used for counting pedestrians and bicycles in the Seire nature path which is also part of the bicycle road around the Plateliai Lake. A Zelt for Car sensor* will be used to estimate the traffic load on the most crowded Plateliai Lake shore. Both counters are produced by Eco-counter and can be easily moved from one place to another. The counters should help to identify the impacts investments in recreational infrastructure have on visitor flows.

The counters will be completely hidden, but the risk of vandalism is still very high. If successful protecting them in the near future, a network of digital visitor counters is planned to be developed throughout the national park area.

The data of counters will contribute to the complex visitor monitoring system of Žemaitija National Park which also consists of recreational digression measurement, photo fixation and visitor counting.

Žemaitija National Park is the first national park in Lithuania to start using digital visitor counting methods and will be a pilot territory for using IT technologies in visitor monitoring.

Gedas Kukanauskas, Žemaitija National Park

* The ZELT Inductive Loop Sensor was originally designed to count bikes and was adapted by eco-counter to count cars as well. Further information at: > www.eco-compteur.com



HOW REGIONS BENEFIT FROM PROTECTED AREAS

WHICH BENEFITS DO PROTECTED AREAS BRING TO THEIR REGIONS

Although the term “Benefits” can be seen as a buttword, it is undisputable: protected areas have many positive effects. Their benefits extend to users at different scales: from local people who use particular species for their livelihood, to nations that depend on abundant fresh-water, to the global community that profits from nature’s capacity to regulate climate.

The specific assets of protected areas belong mostly to the category of ecological merits. Well-managed protected areas are proven mechanism in the conservation and maintenance of healthy ecosystems and the services they provide.

Depending on the type of protected areas, its regional location and specific natural background protected areas:

- + are important tools for the conservation of biodiversity;
- + offer many environmental services; protected areas provide, for instance, clear water and fresh air, avoid land degradation and extenuate weather events, floods or droughts;
- + can mitigate impacts and other effects related to climate change, e.g. as a buffer for nature, as safe havens that native species need to retain their natural resilience, as “refugia” (places) where favorable habitats will persist or develop as the climate changes; in this regard you should not overestimate the power of protected areas – WWF (ny: 1) warns that protected areas “themselves need to be changed and adapted if they are to meet the challenges posed by global warming”;
- + provide quietness and tranquillity.

Please keep always in mind that resources of protected areas only become a benefit when they are successfully used to provide gains to stakeholders (WWF 2009: 4). That is why we should focus discussions on “potential benefits”.

Not only ecological but also social and economic benefits

At least since the World Summit of Rio in 1992 we talk about sustainability. Not only natural but also economic and social aspects have to be considered simultaneously and on equal level in any subject. Thus, there is the question whether protected areas are also relevant in social and the economic dimensions.

Indeed, there are also economic benefits. Sometimes it is even emphasized that protected areas are economic engines for regional development.

For example, there are always jobs directly linked to protected areas with indirect effects such as income and taxes. And depending on the management of the protected areas further economic activities can be initiated in the region. The most obvious business is tourism.



Protected areas bring tremendous cultural and spiritual benefits to society. Commonly we notice that protected areas can improve the quality of life due to natural and environmental benefits. The social dimension comprises several very different fields: on one hand it involves recreational, health and well-being effects, on the other hand cultural and spiritual values (historic buildings, pilgrimage routes or sacred natural sites) are also covered.

Potential Economic Benefits

Protected areas:

- + Provide employment which indirectly leads to income and taxes
- + Can initiate regional development
- + Support regional marketing

Potential Social Benefits

Protected areas provide a basis for:

- + Recreation
- + Health and well-being
- + Environmental education
- + Cultural and spiritual values
- + Pride in community or even identity on regional level.

But: without healthy ecosystems, lasting and sustained social and economic development is not possible.

Prof. Wilhelm Steingrube, University of Greifswald



HOW TO MEASURE BENEFITS?

Protected areas are causing costs for their responsible public bodies. Thus, there is a constant need for explanation and self-justification. In future this need is likely to increase due to the ever-increasing budget cuts in public institutions. Therefore, protected areas have to show and explain their benefits. Not as a matter of duty – but to promote them as great chance for regional development.

Well prepared presentations can demonstrate decision-makers as well as communities that protected areas are big assets that justify public/private support!

Keep always in mind that the wording has to be simple – the target groups for the Benefit-Monitor are not scientists and experts.

Of course, the power of persuasion depends not only on a nice presentation but also on the quality of given information. The usually mentioned potential benefits sound plausible – due to their general character nobody likes to disagree. Long reports or brochures showing the beauty of nature by pictures are really nice but not convincing for most decision-makers.

Thus: protected areas have to explain their specific benefits in a way the “target groups” prefers. The most conclusive results achieve numbers. Hence quantifiable indicators to measure the assets are needed.

Unfortunately there are two difficulties to satisfy this demand:

- + Not all benefits are measurable (directly).
- + The effort to collect and calculate the data is often very high.

Most methods of measuring benefits of protected areas are based on the concept of “Ecosystem Services”. Thus there is already an experience of several decades.

Ecosystem

is a dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit.

Ecosystem Services

are humankind benefits which are provided by a multitude of resources and processes of natural ecosystems.

A lot of studies, but

There are many publications dealing with measuring benefits – discussing it from different points of view: Several are focussing on the term of sustainability – sustainability in general as well as for specific sciences like ecology or economy – and some are focussing directly on protected areas.

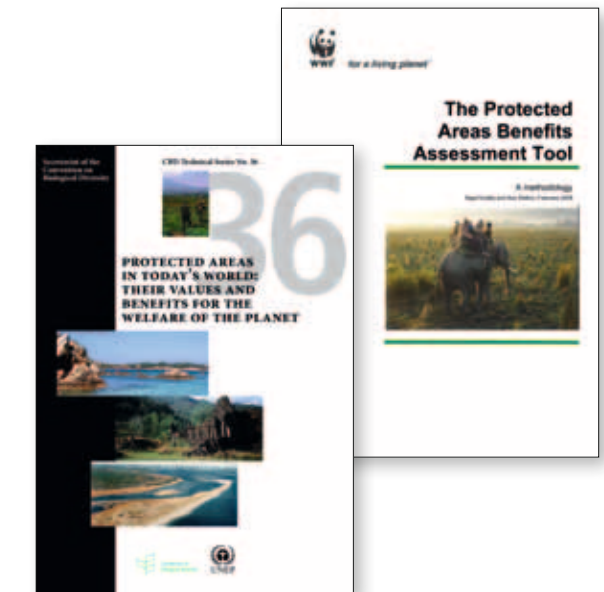
The quality of protected areas studies is also very different: Many are on high theoretical level but difficult to transfer to reality or they deal with challenges on global level (e.g. Taylor & Figgis 2007 or CBD 2008); others are closer to reality but focussing only on a very specific kind of protected area, i.e. coastal zones or bird migrating areas.

One paper seems to fit perfectly: WWF (2009) published “The Protected Area Benefit Assessment Tool”. It is a very good planning tool based on long-term experience. All relevant aspects ranging from nature conservation values via benefits of water and food to cultural, spiritual and health values are included.

But the study itself points out, that it is not a monitoring tool for benefits, its main objective is the assessment! This means, you can use it for several tasks, but the result is not a “complex index” which documents the importance of a protected area or compares several protected areas. It is just a broad collection to cover all facts and implications of protected areas goods and services.

The WWF-study (2009) is not a benefit promotion scheme, but a very good assistance:

- + In compiling information on the full range of current and potential benefits of individual protected areas;
- + In getting new ideas and suggestions;
- + As a kind of check list to identify important values and key areas for future development;
- + To run assessments in a way the study has been developed for.



“Valuing” the Benefits

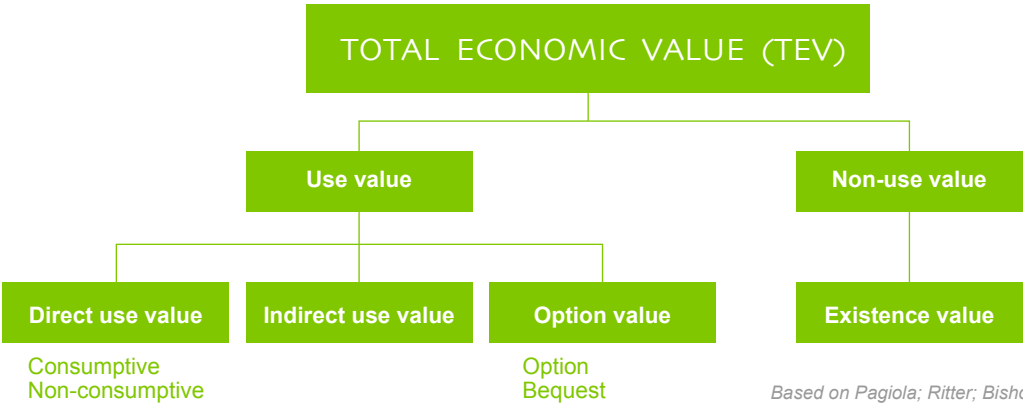
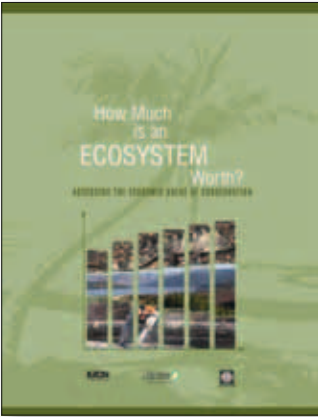
Due to the “faith in figures” that many people and in particular decision-makers have, the benefits of protected areas should be demonstrated by quantitative indicators. Even higher is the power of persuasion if you can indicate the values in positive monetary effects.

Unfortunately, it is not always a straightforward process to value each single good and service of an individual protected area. Many benefits of a protected area are not traded on commercial markets and therefore they have no evident market value. To make “apples and oranges comparable” the values of non-market goods and services need to be measured and ideally expressed in monetary units.

The so called “Total Economic Value” (TEV) is the most widely deployed framework to identify and quantify the contribution of Ecosystem Services to human well being. Economists typically classify ecosystem goods and services according to how they are used. There are “use values” which you can subdivide in three kinds of usage and “non-use values”.

Hence, 4 main categories are applied to determine the TEV:

- 1 Direct use values; most often enjoyed by visitors and residents (= all kinds of consumption like harvesting of food products or timber for construction as well as hunting of animals, and furthermore non-consumptive utilization, for instance recreational activities)
- 2 Indirect use values (= benefits which are generated outside the area itself like water filtration or positive climate effects for the whole world)
- 3 Option values (= assets not used now but preserved for future usage; mostly cultural services)
- 4 Existence values (= non-use values = passive use values; resources people enjoy to know about but they do not use them).



Based on Pagiola; Ritter; Bishop (2004: 9)

For the concrete calculation of these different values various techniques are available. Three groups can be distinguished:

- 1 Revealed preference methods
- 2 Stated preference methods
- 3 Other methods, in particular the “benefits transfer” (see Pagiola; Ritter; Bishop 2004: 11).

All methods have their specific demerits you need to know when applying. Furthermore you have to avoid double-valuations which are covered by a difficult terminology: Nearly all goods and services are based on few natural assets, and sometimes the theoretically derived benefits exclude each other or a discussed service is a part of another one.

Already this very general introduction of TEV shows – as mentioned above – that these valuation methods need quite some effort to collect a) the necessary data and information and b) to calculate values by several different techniques, which include uncertainties.

Concerning general benefit discussions or promotion of an individual protected area such techniques require experience in marketing and socio-economic methods.



Benefit-Monitor = Minimum Set of Indicators

The Benefit-Monitor is a simple structured minimum set of indicators every protected area should collect and update regularly for promotion as well as for justification, if necessary.

Structure:

It is useful to follow the plain model of sustainability which is subdivided into the three dimensions: nature-society-economy. Each dimension needs to be mentioned and documented by basic indicators. These – here described – indicators may be in detail not easy to ascertain in the beginning, but they act as minimum standard.

Usage:

All necessary information should be updated on a yearly basis and published on the protected areas' webpage/in a leaflet. Furthermore the management should prepare some presentations they can use for different purposes and various occasions.

Set of indicators:

The number of visitors is the most important basic information each protected area has to know (see also page 100). This indicator shows how many people actually enjoy the services of the protected area.

Ecological benefits

The headline “ecological benefits” should cover the natural assets of an individual protected area. They have to be “well-known” as they are the reason for defining and confirming officially the region as a protected area.

This information is individual for each protected areas. Do not only use benefits on global level. Refer to those on local and regional level as these qualities are more interesting for affected and involved stakeholders and inhabitants than the abstract and anonymous global level.

Publish concrete information! For example: The number of people who receive fresh water from the protected area; the number of species from red list; the names of endemic plants within the protected area; the number of migratory birds.



Economic dimension

There are mainly two – however very important – data the economic dimension needs:

- 1 the number of employees; although this number is often used to show that protected areas can cost significant money for their responsible public bodies it should be used to prove concrete positive aspects of the protected areas: employees ensure the livelihood of the community, pay taxes and support the regional economy by their salaries;
- 2 the number of visitors of the protected areas; based on this number you can show roughly the economic effects caused by these visitors: To calculate such an induced turnover you need to know additionally the average turnover originating from tourists' and day trippers' spendings from another (representative national) studies. The result is usually a very high amount of money (= direct tourism income) and that works very convincing to most people.

Social dimension

The social dimension is to be described mostly by indicators which are valid for many protected areas.

That is:

- + The protected area provides a high level of healthy quality of life to local and regional population.
- + The protected area offers possibilities for recreation and leisure. This is the most important social asset. Thus it should be better highlighted. Promoting the number of visitors this benefit sounds more important. Hence point out that the protected area brings annually high level of recreation and leisure to at least xxx people.
- + To underline not only the recreational but also the educational function publish the number of guided tours and the number of participants.
- + Depending on the success and popularity the protected area can give the local population pride and is able to support the development of a local identity.



Vision for protected areas: a GIS based “Benefit Monitoring System”

Monitoring implies to be aware of the current status of a system. The purpose of an individual protected area monitoring system (PA-MS) is to have complete and actual information about the situation of the protected area at any time.

Based on the information from different dates it is possible to derive time series which allow on their part several deeper analyses, for instance to identify future developments in an early phase.

PA-MS requires at least three constraints: You need

- + To have a defined set of information (indicators)
- + To update the database regularly
- + To have a structure and system to manage and to analyse the information

To define a set of indicators, which involves of course more data than the Benefit-Monitor described above, is a solvable task. However, the regular updating of the data is time and cost-intensive. The bottleneck to realise an ideal PA-MS seems to be the management software to run this system. This is also not unsolvable; it needs sufficient manpower and money to be developed, operated and maintained.

As much information have a spatial context (ecological hotspots, entries and ways of visitors) it is apparent to use a Geographical Information system (GIS) as a basis. However, a PA-MS describes “only” the current situation.

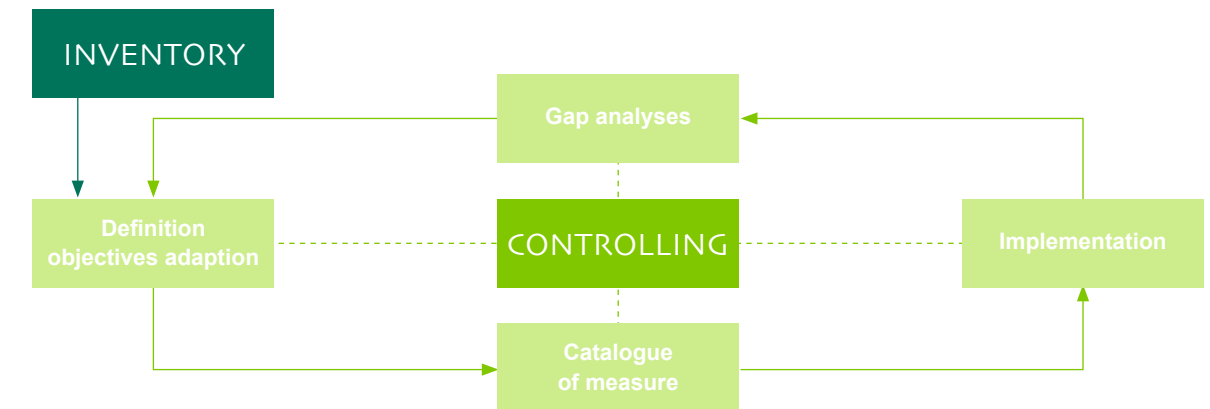
But monitoring is not an episodic action, it is a permanent process. Thus, the ideal B-MS ought to work as a supportive tool with controlling functions for the management of protected areas. That means the B-MS should additionally compare the current situation with defined objectives – to show the gaps.

MS = monitoring system
PA-MS = monitoring system
for a protected area
B-MS = benefit monitoring system

If an individual protected area starts to implement a B-MS a comprehensive inventory has to be done first. The next step is the definition of objectives (goals) to be achieved within a certain period. Only on this basis a catalogue of clearly defined measures can be developed. Afterwards these measures have to be realised. Finally, there is a check whether the defined objectives were achieved or to demonstrate how big the gap is. Then the objectives must be adapted and new ones are to be defined for the next period. Please have in mind that the controlling is vital and a permanent process.

A good controlling observes and reacts simultaneously while all other steps are executed – not as a hard final control mechanism. By this way undesirable developments can be identified at an early stage.

THE CONTROLLING CIRCLE OF THE BENEFIT MONITORING SYSTEM



Conclusion:

Protected areas offer many benefits and these should be communicated actively. The use of a Benefit-Monitor – a simple minimum-structured collection of indicators – provides an excellent method. The data cover all three dimensions of sustainability. It can also be used for different purposes and it is the basis for a monitoring system with controlling functions to be developed later if desired.

Prof. Wilhelm Steingrube, University of Greifswald

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HOW TO MEASURE ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS – THE “JOB-METHOD”

How important are protected areas for the tourism development of the region? What is their significance for the region's economical development? To provide an answer to these questions the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) and the Institute for Economic Geography at the University of Munich (headed by Prof. Hubert Job, currently University of Würzburg) developed a method for analysing the economical effects generated in protected areas – based on three German protected areas – in 2004/2005.

Positive economical effects of protected areas have been outlined by different regional economical studies before leading i.e. to an increasing acceptance and the acquisition of new partners and supporters. The results are to enable the protected areas managements to carry out analyses of regional economical effects independently using a standardized method. It further allows the management to draw conclusions in terms of its public relations and positioning in the field of tourism.

There are two main variables for analysing the economical effects: the number of visitors and their spending. A careful determination of these numbers is of great importance as the final results might vary widely when big mistakes in visitor tracking occur. However, monitoring of visitors and the growing knowledge about the activities of visitors in their area already help protected areas when i.e. planning visitor guidance measures.

To calculate the economic effects using a value-added analysis, the demand side (results of surveys/interviews

with guests) and the supply side (value added ratio, individual analysis) need to be linked. The main basis for the determination of the effects is the field research in form of visitor counting, short interviews, surveys on issues and spatial behavior and expert interviews. Additionally, existing documents and official statistics are evaluated.

The “Job-method” in detail

Step 1 – Determination of gross turnover (number of visitors multiplied by daily spending)

At first, the number of visitors at selected survey days has to be determined. At the remaining days the numbers are extrapolated, equipped with a weather-ratio factor. A crucial aspect is i.e. the day of the survey – a weekday or a weekend – as on weekends significantly more people visit the protected areas. Any double counting is eliminated by surveys. The target groups identified with their respective spending are included in the calculation according to their actual importance. The character of the individual target groups is elicited in the interviews.

Step 2 – Description of the industries benefiting

The benefiting industries (e.g. hospitality, retail, service) are determined by surveys. It is important to consider the regional specific leisure time activities/facilities when developing the questionnaire. The more differentiated the spending for i.e. accommodation, food, leisure time is queried, the more accurately the value rates and value-added-tax rates (see step 3 and 4) are estimated.

Step 3 – Differentiation of sales by market segments

The aim of this intermediate step is to determine different target groups (i.e. day trippers or overnight tourists) and their significance for the protected areas. A distinction of the visitors by specific characteristics will help the management to align the marketing according to its target groups.

Step 4 – Determination of the net sales (gross sales minus VAT)

The net sales result from the deduction of the value-added-tax. The amount of German value-added-tax varies according to supply (all-out gastronomy, food, museums) between 0 and 19% and must not be neglected.

Step 5 – Determination of the direct income effects (net sales multiplied by value added ratio)

To calculate the direct income effects the value-added ratio is needed. It is the part of net sales which directly turns into income. The value added ratio varies depending on industry or business type: i.e. the value added ratio in food retailing is 10%, in tourist information offices up to 70%.

Step 6 – Determination of the indirect income effects (net sales minus direct income effects)

This step analyses the indirect income, which is generated from tourism industry in the protected areas. It shows all inputs (e.g. delivery of goods, investments in the preservation of substance), which are applied to the maintenance of tourism service quality. The identification of those companies indirectly profiting can only be repre-

sented in a very complex way. Many years of experience quantify a value added rate of about 30% in terms of indirect effects.

Step 7 – Determination of the total income effects

The total income effects result from the addition of direct and indirect effects (see steps 5 and 6).

Step 8 – Analysing the employment effects

The calculation of employment effects is similar to the previous calculation. The direct and indirect income effects generated by protected area visitors are divided by the average national income in the study area. The result would be a fictitious number of people who could back up their living by tourism in protected areas.

One of the three case studies from 2004 represented the Müritz National Park in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (GER) which is the main tourist attraction in the region. A recent analysis of the regional economic effects of tourism was – with support of the PARKS & BENEFITS project – carried out in 2010 and renewed the results of 2004/2005. At twelve locations within the park data was collected; visitors were counted and short interviews were conducted. The surveys took place on 20 days in 2010, in low as well as in summer season. By using three simple questions the National Park affinity of visitors was determined. Compared to other German protected areas, there is a high value (48%) of National Park visitor in the narrow sense showing a high attractiveness of the area due to the protected area status. Based on the above described steps base there is gross



turnover of 20,2 million Euro generated by tourism in the Müritz National Park. Further direct and indirect income effects of 10,4 million Euro have been calculated (minus value added tax and services). Compared with 2004 the incomes of 6.9 million Euro have risen sharply. The last step (employment effects) reveals a number of 651 persons employed by tourism. This number could be much higher when persons partially living from tourism were included.

The results generated by using the “Job-method” show a high degree of regional economic importance of tourism in the Müritz National Park region. An important statement was also made about the distribution of day trippers and overnight tourists: 90.8 % of all visitors were overnight visitors accounting for 97 % of total revenues from tourism. This is i.e. interesting for the park management’s marketing.

A generalization or extrapolation of a protected area on the whole of Germany is not possible. Each protected area shows different results regarding the regional economic impact as i.e. the spending patterns of visitors sometimes varies to a great extend within the country.

Malte Scharrenberg, Sandra Fieber, animare projectmanagement

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Job, H. et al. 2005. Ökonomische Effekte von Großschutzgebieten > www.bfn.de

THE "JOB-METHOD" IN A NUTSHELL

1

The “Job-method” is financially supported and developed by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety as well as the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (2005).

2

It is applicable in all large protected areas with only few exceptions.

3

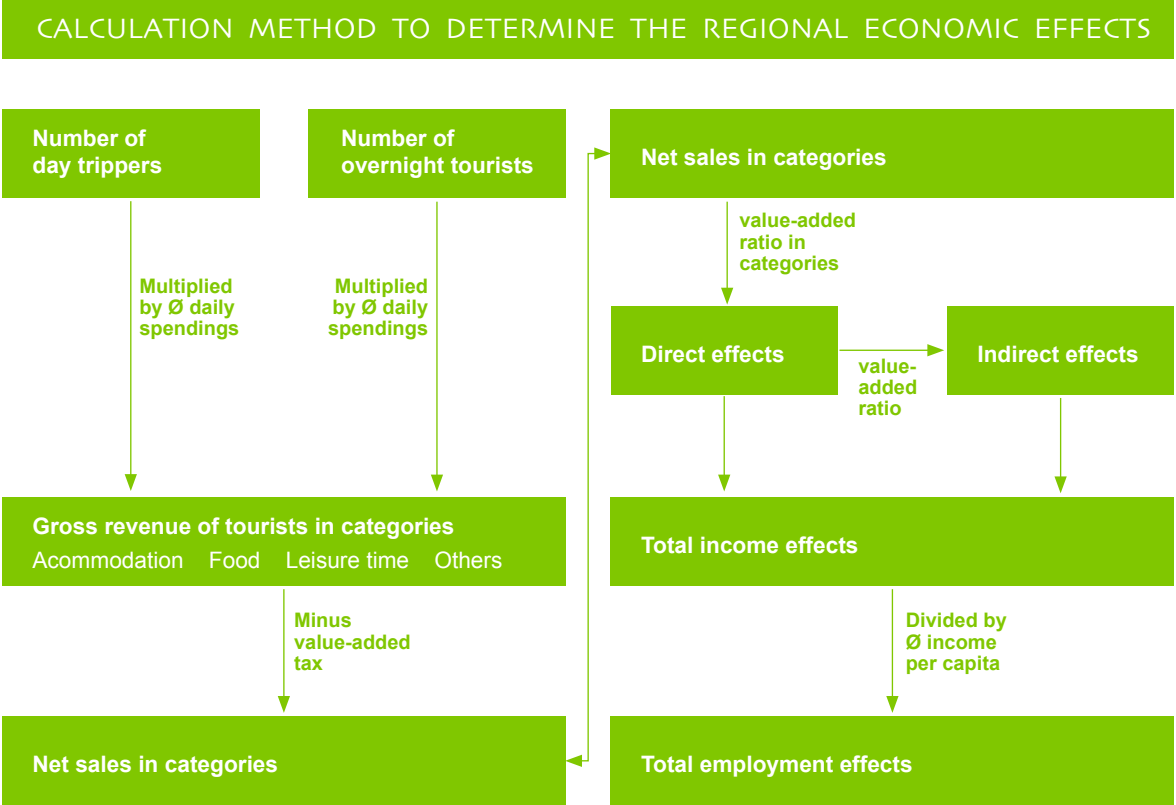
Today, the majority of the German national parks is analyzed in terms of their regional economic effects by this method. Applying the same method thus provides a basis for comparability.

4

The quantification of the regional economic effects for the “Job-method” or other methods has become an integral part of the defined standards of the evaluation of German national parks.

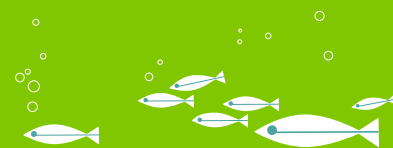
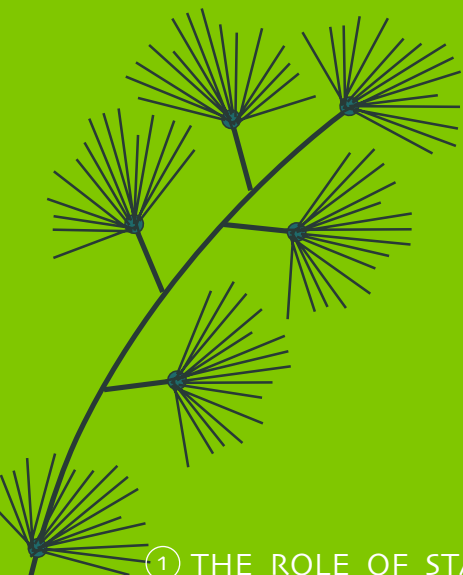
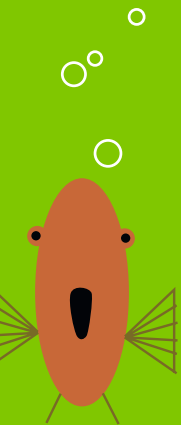
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The results of these studies are well suited for a protected area to communicate the benefits to the public.



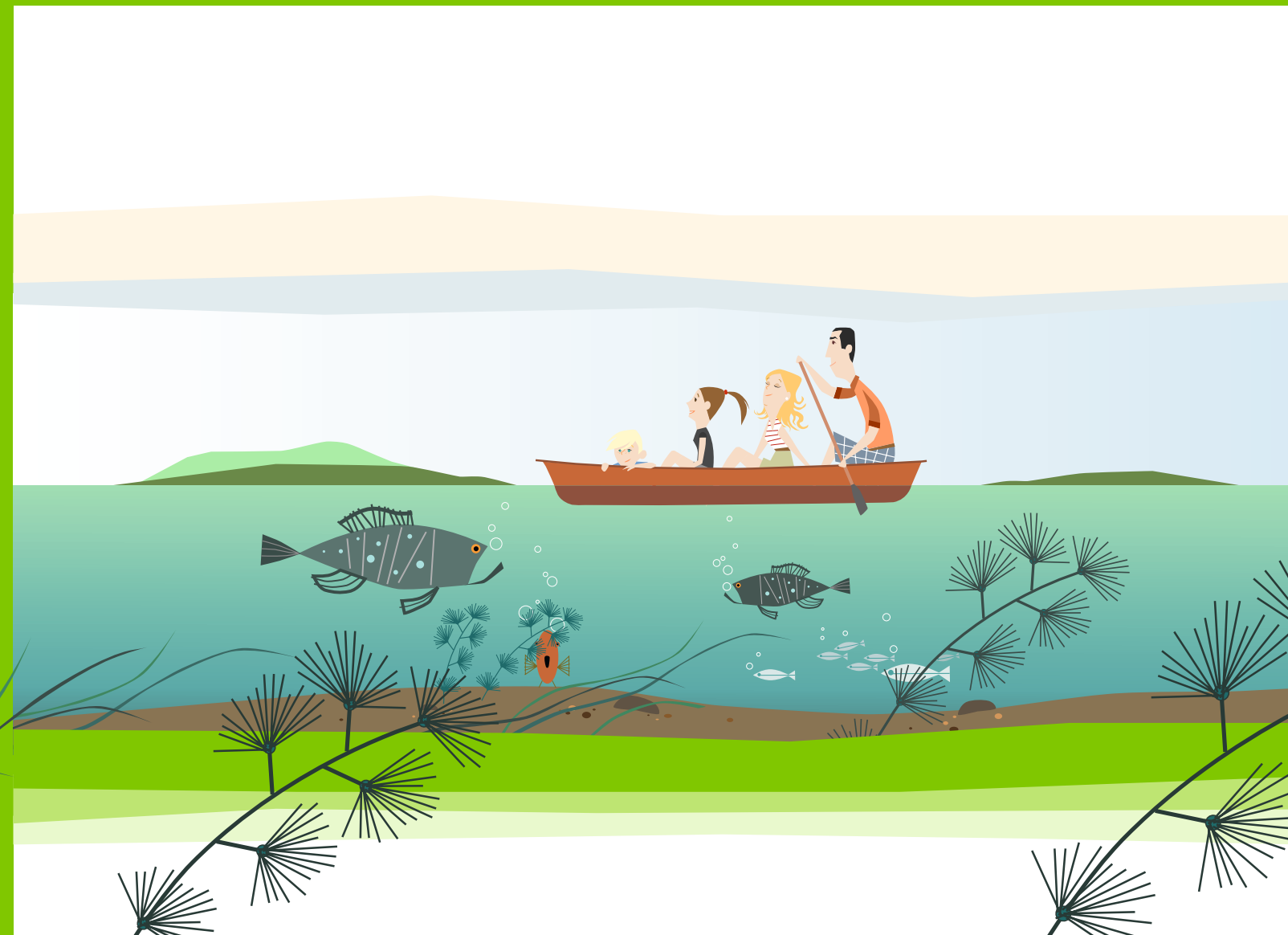
Own illustration according to H. Job (2010): Regionalökonomische Effekte des Tourismus in deutschen Nationalparken. – Presentation in the frame of: Conference on “Heritage beech forests” in Ebrach/Steigerwald, 17.07.2010.





- ① THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDER FORUMS
- ② ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR PROTECTED AREA PARTNERS/SMES
- ③ FORMS OF COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS
- ④ TRAINING OF STAKEHOLDERS AND STAFF

HOW TO ESTABLISH LONG-LASTING PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS?



THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDER FORUMS

The European Charter reflects the common desire of park management authorities as well as of local stakeholders and representatives of the tourism industry to develop tourism in line with the principles of sustainable development. A focused and close cooperation within the process of implementing the Charter serves as a basis for protected areas to strengthen relationships with local tourism stakeholders and the wider tourism industry and supports an intensive networking among the SMEs in the area. Traditional barriers can be broken down and new ways can be opened to develop a high standard in sustain tourism as well as a strong identification with the park.

Experiences show that it is vitally important to integrate relevant stakeholders well and early into the implementation of the European Charter at local level. Thus the understanding of the objectives of protected areas among the tourism representatives can be increased and traditional barriers between the various interest groups can be eliminated at an early stage. This is not



always easy, because the sensitivity of ecosystems and the requirements of tourism often have a high potential for conflict. However, the incentives of SMEs to cooperate with the protected area are diverse, among them:

- + The direct proximity to the park
- + A better cooperation with the park for their mutual benefit
- + Strengthening the acceptance of the protected area
- + Representation of the own commitment to the goals of the conservation area
- + The use of nature for an efficient and targeted guest approach and product development.

The future success of sustainable tourism development in protected areas depends heavily on the willingness of stakeholders and management authorities to cooperate. SMEs often need to be convinced of the benefits of a close partnership and the added value they can draw from it. But continuous efforts of park administrations approaching their local SMEs show that areas of cooperation are thoroughly available. Personal interviews e.g. can help the administrative staff to gain a better insight into the needs of SMEs and to build up a trustful relationship. Nevertheless, it is a lengthy process. Corresponding forums need to be created and/or existing forums should be further developed to secure the partnership in the long-term. Regular meetings that act as a permanent stakeholder forum can give new impulses and allows a lively exchange of information among the partners. The journey is the destination!

Sandra Fieber, animare projectmanagement

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR PROTECTED AREA PARTNERS

Based on the current situation regarding the terms of cooperation of park administrations with local SMEs the PARKS & BENEFITS project partners developed a short SWOT Analysis on future development plans. Please see the partners' assessment criteria for cooperation structures with local SMEs below.

In which fields do you want to cooperate with your local SMEs?

- + Environmental education
- + Tourism services and product development; e.g.
 - guided tours,
 - event organisation
 - development and management of trails
- + PR and marketing
- + Transfer of existing tourism infrastructure to SMEs

What are your expectations/demands on a future cooperation with SMEs?

- + General support and better involvement as park staff being reduced
- + Greater identity with park objectives, not just technical quality
- + Networking and marketing to gain a higher recognition of protected areas
- + Environmentally friendly businesses
- + Improvement of quality of information on offer
- + Improve quality of service providers' offer
- + Environmentally friendly behaviour through certification

Parks' expectations towards SMEs in the course of implementing the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas – set of minimum criteria:

Cooperating SMEs must:

- + Ensure barrier freedom for handicapped people
- + Have an environmental friendly water and waste management
- + Perform environmental education of staff
- + Foster environmental friendly mobility services
- + Favour environmental friendly purchase
- + Not be involved in activities causing damage to environment, nature and cultural values
- + Meet minimum quality standards
- + Use regional products/suppliers
- + Inform guests about the protected area
- + Identify with the aims of protected area
- + Be committed to the idea of sustainable tourism
- + Support common activities of the park developed in joint decisions
- + Have a vision for the future (product development, quality management etc.)

An alternative approach was developed by the Müritz National Park, Germany. The park administration established a partnership model to get on good cooperation terms with their local SMEs. Up to now there are 41 businesses involved in the partnership programme. The partners have to fulfil certain standards on quality, cooperation, information, identification and environmental issues, among them:

- + Partners identify themselves with the goals and vision of Müritz National Park and meet the necessary quality requirements, as confirmed by quality labels or certificates such as Viabono, MQM, Ecocamping or Bio-certificate.
- + National Park Partners are distinguished by the fact that they provide up-to-date and accurate information about the Müritz National Park and that their employees are well informed about the National Park.

- + Cooperation with the Müritz National Park Authority and other actors in the region is taken for granted for National Park Partners.
 - + Müritz National Park Partners value the use of regional products and act environmental friendly.
- > www.muertitz-nationalpark-partner.de

Several existing quality labels are confirmed as quality evidence such as the EU ecolabel (agriculture, MQM, viabono or ecocamping). But negative experiences with some label routines provoked several SMEs to not renew their label registrations. This encouraged the park administration to initiate an own labelling standard in the frame of the "Nationale Naturlandschaften" Network – the umbrella organisation of German nature parks, national parks and biosphere reserves.

> www.nationale-naturlandschaften.de

Susann Plant, animare projectmanagement



FORMS OF COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS



Advantages of PPPs in protected areas are, e.g.:

- + Circumstances in protected areas are ideal as both private and public interests intersect
- + Optimization of funds
- + Avoid project duplication and opposing activities
- + Better promotion of natural heritage

Outcomes of PPP in protected areas are:

- + Private and public bodies must be able to earn money > improvement of financial capabilities
- + Success in management using private funds
- + Improvement of relations with local stakeholders
- + Consensus by local population
- + Good tool to solve many problems to the benefit of all (the parks and enterprises)

Difficulties:

- + Attitudes need to be proactive and positive
- + A not shared mission: privates must feel that the mission of the park is in line with their mission
- + Different "languages"
- + Lack of continuity
- + Lack of capability

Important considerations:

- + Involve local stakeholders
- + Speak a common language
- + Be part of the same identity
- + Share the same mission
- + Set up clear rules and requirements
- + Use different sources of funding

During summer months many protected areas nowadays have to deal with a great visitor impact which reveals the need for cooperation with the private sector in one or the other way. A number of Public-Private-Partnership models (PPP) have been developed over the past years adjusted to the local needs and demands.



The parks' own expectations regarding cooperation models with their local businesses vary to a great extent. Please find below the results of a common discussion on prioritising criteria and PPP models:

General cooperation fields	Demands on SMEs	PPP models to be used
<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Guided tours+ Development and management of trails+ Maintenance of park area+ Management of infrastructure+ Environmental education+ Product development+ Marketing+ Event organisation+ Transport service+ Management of parking spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Bring in additional resources+ Co-financing certain activities+ Meet aims of park administration+ Engagement in environmental protection+ Green products+ Authenticity+ Environmental sound behaviour+ Run specific services in park area+ Share the same mission+ Be part of the same identity+ Closer guest contacts+ Use of ecolabel+ Greater involvement of SMEs+ Higher recognition of brand+ Improve product quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Loose cooperation via workshops+ Partnership agreements+ Marketing cooperation contracts+ New cooperation structure "friends of..."+ Entrepreneurs to form NGO+ NGO of municipalities+ Board of supporters

Sandra Fieber, animare projectmanagement

TRAINING FOR STAFF AND STAKEHOLDERS

Well-trained employees are essential for the development and management of protected areas and should be given high priority. Not only do they increase the protected area management's efficiency but continuous targeted training is also seen as a vital component in order to prepare the staff for future challenges supporting innovative and creative approaches.

The park partner of the PARKS & BENEFITS project have identified own shortcomings in staff training programs in the course of implementing the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism among them the following:

- + Tourism (product) development
- + Marketing
- + Rhetoric and conflict resolution/communication with residents and various interest groups
- + Environmental education
- + Visitor management and monitoring
- + Foreign language skills
- + Project management, presentation techniques, fundraising, financial planning.

Some of them have already been underlined with learning objectives, target groups, teaching methods and external input.

Proposal for further trainings/seminars related to the implementation of the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas:

- + Carrying capacity
- + Quality standards/ecolabels
- + Specific English language courses focusing on the needs of rangers and the administrations of protected areas to address international target groups
- + Nature interpretation and visitor guidance

Marketing Training

- + Gain knowledge about target groups' needs and target group orientation for products in nature
- + Tourism segments
- + Learn about how to develop tourism products and product packages
- + Learn about how to sell tourism products to tour operators
- + Learn about how to market tourism products with a small marketing budget

Key facts:

Duration: 1 or 2 days seminar

Participants/target groups: Staff employed at protected areas administrations, being responsible for promotion and public relation

Experts/lecturers to be invited: Tourism marketing experts, internationally operating tour; operators specialised in the nature tourism segment

Teaching method/ Interactive learning: Mix of input presentations and steered group work for development and discussion of own product proposals



Training on how to communicate values and benefits of protected areas

- + Learn about a range of arguments available for protected areas to communicate their values and benefits, explore their meanings and usefulness: tourism development potential, economic impact, social impacts, cultural values, health and nature issues
- + Work with WWF's "Protected Areas Benefits Assessment Tool" in order to equip participant with a method to identify and assess the values and benefits of their own protected areas
- + Learn about ways of better communicating and using the values and benefits for various strategic target groups and stakeholders in order to generate political will, create public awareness and mobilise increased funding for protected areas

Key facts:

Duration: 1 or 2 days seminar

Participants/target groups: Staff employed at protected area administrations, nature conservation agencies, NGOs etc.

Experts/lecturers to be invited: Representatives from national parks and nature parks telling about their values and benefits and how they communicate them to the public

Teaching method: Input presentations and moderated interactive discussions

Seminar about the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

- + Learn about the European Charter – background, idea, how to be certified, the different aspect of the certification process, tourism action plans, involvement of local tourism business and tour operators, balanced use of protected areas
- + Learn about how to improve the experience of the visitors, the benefits for tourism business, and the protection of the nature valued within the areas by using the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in protected areas
- + Transfer knowledge and experiences on how to implement the Charter on local level

Key facts:

Duration: 1 day seminar

Participants/target groups: Staff employed at protected area administrations, nature conservation agencies, NGOs, consultants etc.

Experts/lecturers to be invited: EUROPARC consulting being the only verifier to certify protected areas with the Charter and telling about the implementation of Charter principles and the certification process

Teaching method: Input presentations and workshops

Seminar about sustainable tourism in protected areas

- + Improve the knowledge about the concept of sustainable tourism based on the principles of the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism for protected areas
- + Learn about the principles of sustainability (ecological, economic and socio-cultural aspects) to be implemented into the planning, development and management of sustainable tourism in protected areas
- + Learn about tourism-related opportunities and risks for protected areas and the local population
- + Be trained on how to analyse and identify the USP of protected areas
- + Be trained on how to develop sustainable tourism products and how to communicate the products to the consumer

Key facts:

Duration: 1 day seminar

Participants/target groups: Professionals working with nature parks and tourism; consultants; administrations
Experts/lecturers to be invited: Tourism experts/boards; EUROPARC representatives

Teaching method: Input presentations, moderated discussions and case studies, exercises in small groups

Seminar about visitor management tools

- + Gain knowledge about existing visitor monitoring and management practices in protected areas
- + Learn about challenges and solutions (Best practices)
- + Learn about management approaches to solve conflicts between tourism and conservation goals
- + Learn how to make use of visitor monitoring data/information and how to evaluate the results
- + Be trained on how to communicate the results effectively

Key facts:

Duration: 1 day seminar

Participants/target groups: Staff employed at protected area and administrations

Experts/lecturers to be invited: Representatives from protected areas with high experiences in the field of visitor management (best practices); Universities

Teaching method: Input presentations and moderated discussions

Sandra Fieber, animare projectmanagement

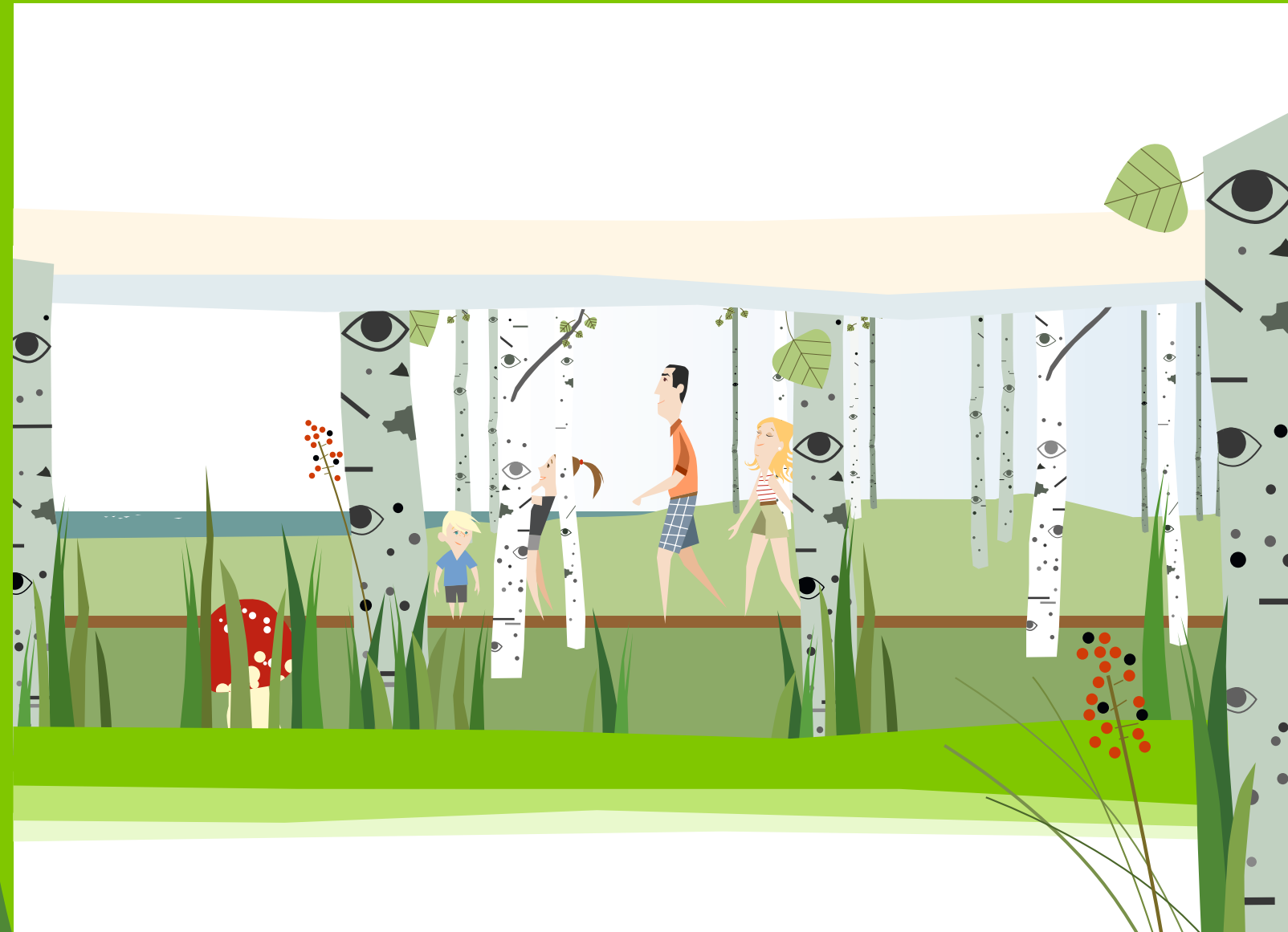
CONTACT

For further information on the seminars, please contact:
animare projectmanagement
> info@animare.net



ON THE WAY TO A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

- ① SETTING UP A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY AND MARKETING
- ② BEST PRACTICES OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND CHARTER PROCESSES FROM 7 PROTECTED AREAS IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION
- ③ SETTING UP A VISITOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGY
- ④ VISITOR MANAGEMENT IN PROTECTED AREAS



SETTING UP A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY AND MARKETING

Successful and sustainable tourism development in protected areas requires an effective tourism planning taking into account the often conflicting roles of conservation and tourism. This is not an easy task to manage but if successful it offers good opportunities to involve stakeholders and communities in the long term. It is essential to have them cooperate with the park management to jointly discuss and plan the future tourism development and to avoid negative impacts such as increased visitor numbers, heavy traffic and inappropriate infrastructure development. Participatory processes are critical components of the planning process.

A well-planned tourism strategy and action plan should therefore be developed in common efforts and answer the following key questions:

- + What is the current impact of nature tourism on the protected area, local communities and tourism businesses?
- + Are there problems with the current level of use?
- + How many visitors can the protected area accommodate without adverse impact?
- + How can park managements secure and increase community and stakeholder involvement?

Main steps to a sustainable tourism strategy

1 Assessment of current tourism situation (including infrastructure, tourism offers)

- + Examination of existing formal and informal planning, analyses and concepts
- + Analysis of structure and capacity of accommodation offers in the protected area and its nearby surrounding/visitor demand assessment of the potential for overnight guests
- + Inventory of gastronomic establishments in the park area and its nearby surrounding
- + Assessment of accessibility/availability of parking facilities at tourist attractions
- + Analysis of tourist attractions, tourist routes and products
- + Analysis of the network of tourist routes (hiking trails/bicycle paths etc.)
- + Assessment of the marketing situation: marketing strategies and distribution channels of tour offers, image and corporate identity; integration into marketing platforms of the region, targeting, etc.
- + Interviews with experts and on-site inspections
- + Description of the current situation and comparison with existing plans inclusive assessing the impact of nature-based tourism on the protected area
- + Documentation of the assessment previously carried out: tabular and cartographic representation of tourism and highlights of the protected area

2 Supply and demand – opinions of guests and locals

- + Visitor demand analysis/face-to-face survey of visitors at selected sites of the protected area and in nearby surrounding
 - Formulating objectives and key questions of the survey, methodology and questionnaire development
 - Interviewer recruiting, training, instruction, pre-test
 - Implementation of the survey
 - Data entry of interviews
 - Evaluation/interpretation of survey results, conclusions about target groups and market assessment
- + Face-to-face-survey of local population at selected sites within the protected area and in nearby surrounding

- Formulating objectives and key questions of the survey, methodology and questionnaire development
- Interviewer recruitment, training, instruction, pre-test
- Implementation of the survey
- Data entry of interviews
- Evaluation/interpretation of survey results

3 Trends, benchmarking and requirements of the tourism offer

- + Assessment of main tourism trends and resulting implications for park tourism
- + Benchmarking and examples of competing destinations, review of lessons learned (pitfalls, success, opportunities)
- + Description of the requirements of different target groups to the tourism offer

4 Consideration of various fields of interests of local stakeholders/SWOT analysis

- + Conducting interviews and workshops with tourism stakeholders/experts
- + Evaluation of findings from interviews and workshops
- + Description of the current situation of the tourism offer in a SWOT analysis and identifying the opportunities and risks
- + Evaluating existing cooperative relations and development potentials
- + Documentation of SWOT analysis



5 Mission statement, goals and development strategies

- + Implementation of working group meetings on the development of mission statement proposals
- + Formulation of the mission statement and guiding principles
- + Implementation of a strategy workshop to discuss the mission statement
- + Presentation of tourism development opportunities in various fields of action, broken down by topics and offers and/or target groups for medium and longer-term development period
- + Formulation of tourism development concept for the protected area into a coherent strategy

6 Projects / action plan

- + Project development workshops
 - Implementation and follow-up of workshops for the development of proposals and list of actions
 - Formulation of scenarios for selected target groups and supply areas / defining reasonable projects that can be linked to the region

- Project gallery: Identification of networking opportunities and synergies, designation of responsibilities
- Implementation and follow-up of a workshop on the coordination of the action plan
- Ranking of projects / definition of key projects and creating project passports for individual projects
- Documentation of the project passes in a specific action plan
- + Development of marketing strategies
 - Definition of target groups and marketing objectives
 - Development of a marketing strategy inclusive
 - Developing proposals for integrating the products into the existing distribution channels of the region and / or defining new distribution channels
 - Defining a concept on the optimization of external communications and marketing of tourism offers: defining short and long-term marketing strategies to meet the marketing objectives
- + Organizational structures and cooperation of tourism providers in the protected area and its surrounding
 - Discussion of a more efficient organizational structure to increase cooperation with tourism providers in the protected area
 - Proposals for the establishment of working groups and cooperation
- + Final report / tourism development concept

Sandra Fieber, animare projectmanagement



BEST PRACTICES OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND CHARTER PROCESSES



THE CHARTER PROCESS IN DOVREFJELL SUNNDALSFJELLA NATIONAL PARK, NORWAY

The Dovrefjell Council established a special project with the following objectives:

- 1 To apply for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and
- 2 To use the project as a tool in order to coordinate a sustainable tourist development project for the businesses in the municipalities around the National Park area.

The project applied for funding from The Value Creation Programme ("Verdiskapningsprosjektet") by the Ministries of Environment and Local Government and Regional development, coordinated by The Directorate of Nature Management and was one out of 10 projects to get

funding to develop a tourist development program prior to transition to a permanent program structure. Due to this funding the Dovrefjell Council was able to develop:

- + A marketing program that complies with a commercial tourist destination
- + With the Dovrefjell National Park area as the main attraction and "natural" tourist destination
- + Across all patterns of administration and tourist organization in the 4 counties, but according to all principles of a sound visitor and marketing strategy,
- + Offers to the businesses at a very low, subsidized (50%) annual marketing fee, with only one central requirement in order to secure acceptance of sustainable practice as tourist business and partner within the Dovrefjell National Park's destination program

Both businesses, tourist offices as well as visitor centres have to certify for the Norwegian ecolabel and gain the status as an "Eco lighthouse Enterprise". This is an ecolabel adjusted to SMEs. It is a more concrete program and goes a bit further than the ISO-system. In order to stimulate the participation of businesses the certification fee for Eco Lighthouse is subsidised with approximately 70%.

The certification criteria as Eco Lighthouse business are for the following types of enterprises:

- + Hotels
- + Simple / low budget accommodation
- + Enterprise as organisers of outdoor activities
- + Outdoor activities facilitators
- + Office / tourist offices



The travel destination program focuses on the following corner stones

- + Based on a marketing, tourist development and visitor strategy orientation
- + With the acceptance of all regulations and guidelines according to the management protection plan
- + Recognising and applying the principles of sustainable practice
- + Totally customized to small and medium sized enterprises
- + With additional tailor-made strategies of tourist development in the 8 involved municipalities
- + Defining 9 tourist development projects implementing an overall visitor strategy for the area in order to develop the area as a viable tourist destination



Involvement of local tourism enterprises

The program addresses all stakeholders within the marketing value chain: starting from The Dovrefjell Council coordinating the program, the municipalities being the facilitating public framework, the tourist offices as information and marketing service providers and last but not least tourist businesses and/or local tourist development projects.

Involvement of the local community

Every municipality is involved through:

1 Formal involvement and dedication

- + All municipalities are represented in The Dovrefjell Council and the municipalities with area in the National Park are represented in the Council's executive committee as well.
- + Both the Council as well as the executive committee have formally decided to apply for the Charter.
- + They have also formally decided to establish a project to coordinate the application process as well as to initiate a tourist development and marketing network.

2 Process involvement

- + The municipalities were updated on the progress/development of the project through presentations on both the formal Dovrefjell Council meetings as well as presentations at the meetings of the Executive Committee.

- + The municipality administrations and the political leadership in each municipality have been invited to the presentation meetings for the businesses in each municipality – in half of the meetings they were present.
- + The SMEs, the tourist offices as well as the municipalities are involved in the implementation of the tourist development strategy and projects which are established in order to strengthen and support the overall strategy for the National Park area.

Involvement of local conservation interests

The Dovrefjell Council has developed a contact network involving in total 275 organisational stakeholders and more than 1.000 private landowners, businesses etc. in the area. The network is mainly used in formal hearings (e.g. protection plan, management plan). As from 2011 a formal stakeholder forum will be established where all types of stakeholders are represented.

Involvement of regional bodies responsible for tourism, and regional development

County tourist organisations

The county tourist organisations have been involved in clarifying the functions and objectives of the project as a tool for tourist destination development. The most important task was to clarify and communicate that a new marketing and web platform was established as a complementary marketing tool for the tourist industry in the area.



Since all municipalities around Dovrefjell are peripheral to the county tourist strategies and organisations both in terms of strategic tourist importance to the different counties as well as geography, there have been no major problems.

County bodies of regional development

The bodies of regional development, as part of the county administrations, are formally involved by one representative in the Project Steering Committee. They are also involved through cooperation in both projects initiated by The Dovrefjell Council as well as local projects where those bodies have established and/or funded local tourist projects. Formally, they are represented by the counties' participation in the Dovrefjell Council.

Klaas van Ommeren, Dovrefjell Sunndalsfjella National Park



THE CHARTER PROCESS IN MÜRITZ NATIONAL PARK, GERMANY

The Müritz National Park was established in 1990 and is located in the heart of the Mecklenburg Lake district, a widely known German tourism destination. The tourism offer of the region is strongly influenced by water tourism. During the past 20 years the tourism facilities became more and more diverse. Major projects, e.g. harbour villages, holiday homes, campsites and a number of hotels are supplemented by a small structured tourism offer from private cottages up to canoe rentals. Müritz National Park has established itself as a centre of attraction for biking and hiking tours, guided tours as well as visits of information centres. For the future success of tourism in the Müritz National Park and the surrounding region it will be of importance to face changing circumstances both regionally and generally in tourism.

- + The tourism demand is strongly shifting towards the generation 50plus. In order to assure a new generation in the tourism sector, guests like young adults, families and children should not be neglected.

Increasing expectations of quality, a sound price-performance-ratio as well as offers according to the visitor's preferences require a new quality consciousness in the region.

- + Major changes in the National Park Region are to be expected by the effects of the demographic change. The continuation of the decline in population is going to cause an increasing ageing of the remaining population especially in peripheral areas and small communities. The supply with basic services and mobility offers are important issues for the future.
- + The tourism offers for the environmental education in Europe become more and more professional, even in their marketing. Appealing visitor centres and highlights like e.g. treetop trails are benchmarks. That implies for the Müritz National Park to be measured by these standards. Remaining successful and competitive in nature tourism and environmental education is a vital goal for the Müritz National Park and means to take part in the market competition and to develop high quality offers with a unique profile. Additionally it will be necessary to catch the attention of tourists with modern and fresh marketing tools.

To accept these future challenges, the Mecklenburg Lake District tourism association and the Müritz National Park authority mutually decided to apply for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism. During this process, a clear framework for the sustainable tourism development was elaborated. It consists of the tourism strategy for the National Park region, wherefrom the action plan was derived in December 2010 by the National Park authority. Finally in May 2011, the tourism development goals for the Mecklenburg Lake district were prepared having many connecting factors to the Müritz National Park Region. Here, the main focus will still be set on water tourism whose further development and combination with nature, health and cultural tourism is given priority. Moreover it is essential to shape the region's tourism profile as a sustainable tourism region by setting new standards, despite budget and staff cuts.

- + Müritz National Park Region could serve as an impulse and example for the sustainable tourism development of the Mecklenburg Lake District. Fresh impulses through innovations in the field of environmentally friendly transport, sustainable tourism infrastructure and thoughtful use of energy to lower impacts of climate change are necessary for this purpose.
- + The future role of the Müritz National Park is not only to be known for the region's unspoiled nature but also as an attractive national park and regional highlight for visitors which offers a unique selection of experiencing

nature and environmental education. One highlight is the registration of Serrahn beech forest as a part of the UNESCO World Natural heritage.

- + Further development of nature tourism with activities like biking, hiking, canoeing and boat trips have good opportunities on the tourism market. The combination of nature tourism with recent topics like health, culture and regional products are new opportunities to develop further. Management systems and guided tours may help to reduce impacts on the nature, above all in the Müritz National Park.
- + With target groups in foreign markets (e.g. the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland and Scandinavia) an internationalisation of the tourism offer is required.

To achieve these objectives necessary measures have been defined, but many cannot be taken by the National Park authority alone. Therefore cooperation and volunteering is becoming more and more important. Although there are years of experience of committee work and networking, e.g. with the Müritz National Park partner enterprises, the new task requires flexible forms of cooperation in terms of regional dimension, time frame and content. With the European Charter, the establishment of the tourism forum is a very good way to cooperate with local stakeholders in order to successfully implement a sustainable tourism development starting with a re-thinking of the tourism businesses.

Martin Kaiser, Müritz National Park



THE CHARTER PROCESS IN NATURE PARK MARIBOSØERNE, DENMARK

The Nature Park Maribosøerne is located in Lolland and Guldborgsund municipalities and is one of Denmark's first regional nature parks. It is also the first Danish member of the EUROPARC Federation. The Maribo Lakes is the only inland lake area in Denmark being protected as a natural landscape (Landskabsfredning), a wildlife sanctuary (Vildtreservat) as well as designated as both a Ramsar and a Natura 2000 area.

The Nature Park was initiated in 1991 and finally established in 1994. It covers approximately 5.000 ha, including 4 lakes. Most of the area is privately owned and the two municipalities therefore share the management responsibility with the private landowners, in consultation

with a User Council established in 2008. Nature interpretation is carried out by two nature interpreters employed by the municipalities. One of the nature interpreters also runs the 'Nature School' in the park and functions as the primary 'contact person' for the park.

This management system is functioning well but requires a high degree of collaboration, coordination, volunteer agreements and a general acceptance of the management tools such as overall strategies, management plans, User Council consultations and access agreements.

Up till now the park is a rather small attraction, mostly known and used by local people. A future challenge will be to adapt the park to more visitors, and a more professional approach to tourism, when the Fehmarn Belt Connection is established.

The PARKS & BENEFITS project was a very good opportunity for the two municipalities to get to know more about sustainable management of nature parks and to start working with visitor management. The exchange of experience and expertise with the other partners in the project has been a valued outcome.

The whole process of getting the certification as a Charter park: European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas was a big challenge. First the process was delayed almost a year, mostly due to some major internal changes in the municipal organisations. This clearly showed us some of the weaknesses we were facing and this led to some reorganisation of the working methods. The park does not have a director and a specific staff, but is run by the two municipalities in general. We have now developed a clearly defined system for the management with very frequent meetings with the key persons from the municipalities and with landowners and the User Group.

The strategy and action plan has been prepared by Lolland and Guldborgsund municipalities, with the assistance of Nordeco (Nordic Agency for Development and Ecology). The Danish partners in PARKS & BENEFITS also include the region of Zealand and the University of Roskilde. The strategy and action plan has been developed in a participatory process, whereby landowners, local tourism initiatives, NGOs, the Nature Park ranger and municipal staff and politicians have been consulted at various stages of the process: at the initial stage by means of individual interviews with members of the

Nature Park's User Council, and later in the process through a series of workshops discussing the SWOT, the draft strategy, the vision and the suggested action plan. A draft version of the action plan has been reviewed and improved by the User Council members.

The first conservation plan for the Nature Park Maribosøerne was produced in 1991 covering a 15-year period and included an action program summarizing a series of actions and activities in the Nature Park. This program is now virtually complete. The first conservation plan was followed, in 2005, by a Vulnerability Plan (Sårbarhedsplan) for the area. This plan assesses the nature's carrying capacity in relation to the visitors' use of the area and the specially protected core areas. The plan for developing outdoor recreation, presented in the Vulnerability Plan, is in line with the recommendations made by EUROPARC. The management of the Nature Park has followed this vulnerability plan since 2005.

The present strategy and action plan will guide the Nature Park's operations for the period 2012 to 2016. Given that the strategy and action plan aims to meet the 10 basic principles of the EUROPARC Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, the Nature Park is expected to qualify for official EUROPARC Charter certification.

Lolland and Guldborgsund municipalities will be responsible for the overall coordination of actions and activities. The municipalities will not necessarily carry out all the activities. It is, however, important that they take the lead





in efforts to identify, support and initiate the actions or activities. Primary responsibility for implementation of the action plan will rotate between the two municipalities, which will in turn hold the chairmanship of the User Council.

Within the municipalities, overall responsibility for implementing the action plan lies with the Department of Development and Business of the Lolland Municipality and with the Department of Nature, Environment and Planning of Guldborgsund Municipality.

When the municipalities are given under the heading 'Responsible authority, potential partners and/or financial supporters', this may include nature interpreters, tourist offices, Business LF (which is funded by municipal grants, development funds, memberships) or the different municipal departments.

The municipalities will need to work together with a number of other institutions and organizations to ensure implementation of the various action plan activities. This applies above all to landowners, the Nature Protection Agency and the Nature Agency, Storstrøm, who own or have management responsibility for the Nature Park areas. All organizations represented on the User Council are potential partners in the various action plan activities.

Both municipalities are planning to open more nature parks, and the whole PARKS & BENEFITS project provided us with valuable knowledge and experiences to proceed with this work. Not least having to work closely together with stakeholders and entrepreneurs has enabled us to develop new ideas and new ways of working, that certainly will help us in our future work with sustainable management of the natural resources in our region.

Catherina Oksen, Guldborgsund municipality

THE CHARTER PROCESS IN KEMERI NATIONAL PARK, LATVIA

Kemeri National Park was founded in 1997 and is situated near the Gulf of Riga, just about 40 km from the capital city Riga and connected to it by railway and three main highways. It covers 38.165 ha and is an area of outstanding concentration of sensitive and unique nature values. Most of the territory of the National Park is covered by different wetlands. Their diversity is amazing, including different types of marshes (raised and transitional bogs, fens), wet forests (riparian black alder forests/swamps, beaver floodings), floodplain meadows, shallow coastal lagoon lakes (one of them is a Ramsar Site), rivers, seacoast. All of these provide excellent habitats for hundreds of species of plants and animals, e.g., Lady's Slipper Orchid, Black Stork, White-tailed Eagle, Corncrake, Great Bittern.



Sulphurous mineral waters and curative mud are peculiarities probably most contributing to the unique appearance of Kemeri National Park. Mineral waters with strong healing qualities and very specific smell of rotten eggs have been forming deep underneath the nearby raised bogs for many centuries, erupting as a number of open springs in the surroundings of Kemeri and securing production of curative mud. Presence of these curative resources brought human life to this remote and inaccessible place centuries ago and protection of their formation processes is one of the main tasks of the managing institution of the Park – Nature Conservation Agency.

People have been present in the territory of Kemeri National Park since the Stone Age. Now, there are about 3.000 inhabitants inside the area, and about 50 of them are involved in tourism related matters.

Why the Charter?

1 Wish to secure and improve the quality of nature conservation.

It is not the easiest issue to communicate, especially in circumstances when "nature is everywhere". On the other hand, nature conservation can only be sustainable and achieve long-term results when everybody is "on the deck" and fully understand the importance behind each measure, even if it may at first seem oppressive and economically unfavourable;



2 Wish to increase the quality of visitor information.

Situated so close to Riga and famous for its status of once so popular international resort, vicinity of Ķemeri has been attracting visitors over long time. Information about nature values is essential, but covers only small part of visitors' needs. Ability to provide all information about the territory – nature values, tourism businesses, services available and events organized – contributes greatly to the image of the managing institution of the Park as a competent and interested organization fully aware of what is going on in their territory;

3 Wish to improve communication and relationship with local inhabitants and stakeholders.

As mentioned in point 1, nature conservation is quite a tough issue to communicate, and the discussions usually concentrate around things that CANNOT be done in the territory because of the nature values. Tourism gives a chance to discuss something that CAN be done and indicates the interest of the managing institution to listen and understand opinions of the people inside the area and the care about their wellbeing.



How?

Step 1 – Bringing everybody together by general meeting.

Good means of getting everybody together and see if the interest is there. Though, to proceed with establishing mutual trust and lay basis for a long term relationship, other, more personal ways should be sought.

Step 2 – Getting to know the stakeholders personally.

A tourism expert was contracted to work out a questionnaire for personal interviews with stakeholders, and house-to-house interviews were done. Information obtained through these interviews was used for SWOT analysis.

Step 3 – Getting together again and creating a vision of what we want to achieve.

Dreaming about the future together helps a lot to understand what direction of development there is in people's minds.

Step 4 – Evaluation of the “status quo” in different aspects of tourism (SWOT analyses).

Together with the stakeholders, Charter principles were covered one by one, analyzing what is the situation like in nature protection, visitor information, quality of tourism services, situation in local society and local economy, visitor monitoring and other sectors covered by the Charter. Several problems were brought up as topical, marketing, quality and lack of information about the territory among them.



Step 5 – Immediate reaction to what people say.

Excursions in Ķemeri National Park, as well as seminars on quality and marketing issues for stakeholders followed within a month.

Step 6 – Carrying out researches on issues lacking information.

During the SWOT analyses, several topics were brought up where the answers were missing due to lack of information. So, researches were ordered about the socio-economic situation in the territory, marketing and tourism potential of cultural values.

Step 7 – Getting down to real action with stakeholders.

Meeting was organized to discuss the offer for the next active tourism season and ways to develop it within the available financing. Agreement on expansion of nature routes along existing infrastructure was reached and ideas drawn on the map. An idea of trying out skiing routes to attract visitors in low season was brought into practice and tested by organizing 5 skiing trips during the coming winter.

Step 8 – Agreement on the strategy and action plan.

Everything that had been discussed and done so far was presented and agreed upon at the forum meeting. Also a decision was reached on the form of future communication and work of the tourism forum.

Main conclusion – even in the 21st century the only means of establishing real, lasting relationships is personal contact. It demands a lot of time, effort and human resources, but it really works and is essential for future cooperation.

Even though it can be considered that the Charter developments are at the very early stage in Ķemeri National Park, lots of benefits can already be felt:

- + Better understanding of the area as a whole, by all sides
- + Ability to provide better information about it
- + Possibility to participate in development of tourism in the territory
- + New contacts and improved communication among the stakeholders (tradition was established to organize seminars not only in the Administration building, but in other tourism businesses, too)
- + New ways of cooperation with tourism businesses (organizing events together, etc.), ideas for possible future tourism products
- + Special bonus – PR, relations with local community have improved due to regular contacts

Agnese Balandina, Nature Protection Agency – Ķemeri National Park Administration



THE CHARTER PROCESS IN BIOSPHERE RESERVE SOUTHEAST-RÜGEN, GERMANY

The Biosphere Reserves are exemplary regions which have an incredible natural and cultural heritage. The Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen was established in 1990 and received the UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 1991. It reflects all the landscape and shorelines of the coast of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern region in the smallest space. Land and sea are deeply interlinked with each other. Peninsulas and promontories on the one hand are connected by narrow strips of land, separated by bays on the other hand. Fine sandy and wide beaches on the Baltic coast alternate with rugged cliffs. On the side of the lagoons (Bodden) the shores are mostly fringed by wide reed beds. Extensive beech forests or grasslands dominate the moraine site, whereas meadows and pastures capture the lowlands formed after the ice age.

Apart from the unique natural features of the area it is also known for its cultural diversity. The evidence of human settlement and culture ranges from the megalithic tombs of the Neolithic through the Bronze Age burial mounds, Slavic hill forts, medieval churches and village structures, classicism and the seaside resort architecture up to modern architecture.

The island of Rügen has been one of the most popular holiday destinations in Germany for more than 100 years; numerous tourists visit the island not only during

the summer months. In order to preserve this magnificent landscape and its culture for all – tourists, visitors and not least locals – it is vital to protect this landscape mosaic and to develop a sustainable tourism and sustainable use.

The Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen has decided to participate in the PARKS & BENEFITS project by the end of 2008 to strengthen the future of the region and to better balance the needs of local economic development and the environment. To put it briefly, the main arguments to join the project were to

- + strengthen regional development,
 - + promote the acceptance of the Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen,
 - + establish strong and lasting public-private-partnerships
- by implementing the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in the Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen.

The process in a nutshell:

Early 2009: Information of key local stakeholders among them municipal councils, associations and institutions about the project objectives to ensure a broad local partnership

Summer 2009: All communities of the Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen, the Tourism Association of Rügen eV (TVR), Tourism and Trade Association Putbus (Putbus TGV) and the Rügen eV products signed the "Letters of Support"

October 2009: Contracting for the development of the SWOT analysis

November 2009: Establishment of a local steering group to monitor the implementation process continuously

December 2009: Presentation and discussion of SWOT analysis in a public forum with 40 local stakeholders and municipalities

May 2010: First common PARKS & BENEFITS event "nature invites you" with the help of local stakeholders, members of the steering group, spa resort administrations

June – September 2010: Visitor survey was conducted (15 days, 6 locations within the biosphere reserve, 1.250 filled out questionnaires)

June 2010: The German project related website was published (www.parksandbenefits.de); target groups are the inhabitants of Rügen, local stakeholders and municipalities

July 2010: SWOT analysis was finished and accepted by the Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen

August 2010: Establishment of three working groups:

- 1) sustainable mobility, 2) sustainable tourism and 3) culture meets nature

October 2010: 2nd forum with ca. 40 local stakeholders, municipalities and politicians; main contents: discussion

of mission statement draft concerning the future tourism development. The results have discussed within the local steering group and the three working groups

January 2011: Formal resolution of the mission statement by the local steering group; working groups begin work on the action plan and tourism strategy

Spring 2011: Establishment of a partner initiative of the Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen and foundation of a regional committee that takes decision on prospective partners; first Biosphere Reserve partners receive their certificate

May 2011: 2nd common PARKS & BENEFITS event takes place supported by the local steering group

Until July 2011: Preparation and discussion of the following marketing products: "Wanderfaltblatt" and image film in local steering group and working groups

July 22, 2011: Press conference on the final mission statement for tourism development

July 2011: Preparation of application documents for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

Stefan Woidig, Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen





THE CHARTER PROCESS IN KURTUVĖNAI REGIONAL PARK, LITHUANIA

The natural surroundings of Kurtuvėnai Regional Park are impressive as well as its cultural heritage. The park is a well-known protected area in Lithuania with its forested landscape, expressive relief, springs, historical Venta-Dubysa canal, baroque barn and horse riding services. The campsite in Kurtuvėnai manor attracts tourists from western Europe. Local people also started to participate in tourism businesses offering regional food and more and more accommodation services. But tourists demand changes gradually: families plan their leisure independently, look for active free time, want to know better about their country. The youth prefers active



and authentic experiences providing entertainment; more mature visitors expect high quality services in the contrary. However, there are not enough efforts of the Regional Park headquarter and the local communities – up till now they are not fully prepared to meet these challenges.

The main reasons determining the lack of knowledge about tourism business are:

- + Low level of economical self-sufficiency
- + Brain drain
- + Ageing community

The principles of the European Charter promote to develop tourism sustainably and seek for economical effects. It is a major but promising task to implement the Charter

principles in the protected area. The first forum meetings allowed us to develop a thorough situation analysis on the basis of the views, fears and expectations of the participating local inhabitants and businessmen. The results obtained will be incorporated into the action plan. It currently is under development; the main guidelines and activities are already listed below:

- + To develop Kurtuvėnai Regional Park as a sustainable tourism attraction area which helps to improve and ensure the value and the meaning of protected areas among the local population as well as visitors. Enhanced marketing and closer cooperation with its partners shall reveal the highlights of the park for visitors.

- + To expand the no. of visiting objects, public facilities and tourism services that meet visitors' needs in quality and quantity.
- + To better involve the Šiauliai City Council in the implementation of solutions as the main visitors of Kurtuvėnai Regional Park are citizens of Šiauliai.
- + To reveal the natural and cultural heritage of our territory for the tourists. It enables visitors to develop personalities and gain experience in every possible way.
- + To get more information about the visitor flow, their influence on nature, tourism market trends etc.
- + To promote local people to get involved in tourism businesses that will be the source of income and wealth.



The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is a good tool to encourage all relevant stakeholders (park headquarter, city councilmen, local businessmen and inhabitants) to sit around the table and discuss the development of sustainable tourism, look for common solutions on how to develop this unique place, improve tourism services and/or change competitive relations to friendly ones. The PARKS & BENEFITS project was a perfect occasion for Kurtuvėnai Regional Park to start this process and share experience with partners.

Jurgita Bartkuvienė, Kurtuvėnai Regional Park





THE CHARTER PROCESS IN ŽEMAITIJA NATIONAL PARK, LITHUANIA

Žemaitija National Park (ŽNP) was established in 1991 with the aim of preserving, managing and sustainably developing those areas of Žemaitija in north-western Lithuania, that are most valued for their natural and cultural qualities. It is an outstanding area with a landscape characterized by natural hills, unique town layout and small-scale architecture, decorated farmsteads, sacral heritage monuments and Plateliai Lake – the only pre-glacial lake in the country.

Žemaitija National Park covers 21.720 hectares with a population of about 3.500 residents. The fact, that the park is a protected area with residents inside its boundaries forces the management to take care about sustainable tourism development in the national park and its surroundings. Currently the national park has sufficiently well-developed tourism services and local businesses: there are 26 rural homesteads, which can generally accommodate up to 627 visitors, 6 accommodation establishments, which can accommodate up to 530 visitors and 6 cafés and restaurants. National events, diving clubs, cold war and Shrove Tuesday museums, private art galleries and expositions attract thousands of visitors every year.

Its experience in tourism development has demonstrated the park that inconsistent and hastily developed tourism cannot generate any benefits, but also destroys most valuable places of protected areas. Therefore the management agrees that only cooperation with local farmers, residents and tourism businesses can lead to the best results and help to protect nature and culture heritage.

In 2011 the Directorate of Žemaitija National Park together with local stakeholders has finished the preparation of its application for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism including sustainable tourism strategy and action plan. The main question was to which kind of tourism the management should pay most attention and which target groups should be chosen. After long discussions it was decided that complex sustainable tourism development for families is most acceptable for all.



The main objectives set in the strategy are:

- + To create favorable conditions for sustainable tourism development in the Žemaitija National Park,
- + To increase the attractiveness of this area,
- + To create added-value of the area and favorable conditions for achieving the objectives of the park and also
- + To create opportunities for local community residents and businesses, which contribute to Žemaitija National Park goals, to have additional benefit.

To reach these aims we have identified 6 objectives:

- 1 Developing urbanized territories by utilizing their recreation potential.
 - + The management will develop Plateliai town into a recreational area and develop this areas' infrastructure and services according to the requirements of a recreational area.
 - + The management will create good conditions for the development of catering services, further enhance the traditional dish of Samogitian and use Plateliai estate for various cultural and educational services.
 - + The management will generate additional value for objects in the former stables and barn of Plateliai estate, i.e. nature exhibitions and/or Mardi Gras museum.
 - + Public infrastructure needs to be developed as well: public internet access, hygiene standards at beaches, public toilets and showers, ATMs, waste management sites.
 - + Taking advantage of the existing infrastructure (yachts, diving clubs, spa hotel, cafe, modern



SETTING UP A VISITOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

campsite and Seire nature trail), the management has to develop the western shore of Plateliai Lake as an active recreational water area (e.g. with diving, beach activities, swimming, fishing, water tools, services).

- + Taking advantage of the existing infrastructure (hotels, rest houses, tourist campsites, resorts, beaches) in Paplatele area the management has to develop a long-term stays in nature (at least 3 days).

- 2 To develop favorable conditions to increase usage of public transport by visitors of Žemaitija National Park. The management has to link all park routes with the public transport system in Plunge (buses, trains). It has to create a permanent information system, which informs National Park visitors about public transport routes, schedules and prices.

- 3 To develop favorable conditions for visitors to stay at the Žemaitija National Park longer than 2 days as well as to encourage product development to improve the offers for non-peak-season visitors. The management has to use and combine all natural and cultural values in the park area to shape routes and adapt them for a comfortable tourist visit. All routes must be aligned with housing services. The park has to revitalize and/or to introduce new traditions, holidays during the cold season.

- 4 Finish developing of infrastructure/facilities to encourage visitors and inhabitants to recycle waste. Waste management systems have to be implemented not only in urban areas, but also in resorts, and campsites. Camping providers must have a sort of waste container and provide information to visitors about the waste management objectives and recommendations.

- 5 Anticipate prevention and management means managing visitors' impact to biodiversity and cultural heritage values. The management has to control visitor flows and prepare facilities for capacity assessment programs.

- 6 Create the conditions for visitors to contribute directly to achieving the objectives of Žemaitija National Park. The management will create a labeling system for products, whose production process and service packages contribute to the objectives of the park. We have to develop information and a delivery system that will let National Park visitors have the opportunity to buy labeled goods or use services that follow the labeling system or contribute their volunteer work to Žemaitija National Park work.

The management hopes that the implementation of this strategy and action plan will raise tourism in Žemaitija National Park to a new level.

Gedas Kukanauskas, Žemaitija National Park

1 Visitor Monitoring instruments

- + Visual monitoring and counting of tourism sights and objects
- + Digital photo or video monitoring
- + Electronically or mechanical registration of visitor numbers
- + Specification of total number of visitors to a concrete territory
- + Self-registration of visitors
- + Surveys (questionnaire-based, face-to-face interviews)
- + Analysis of secondary data and statistics
- + others

2 Visitor Guidance and Information instrument

- + Access points, visitor centres, observation facilities and resting places (environmental education + information + establishment of highlights)
- + Network of accessible hiking paths, cycle tracks, waterways
- + Specific theme-oriented hiking routes, cycling routes and water tourism routes
- + Information boards
- + Information material such as maps, brochures, route descriptions (print media and online)

- + Information and visitor navigation by offering GPS-based IT-solutions
- + Public transport access to certain starting points
- + The existence or non-existence of parking places > access to certain starting points
- + Guided tours offered by rangers of the protected area
- + Limited licenses to tourism companies to offer organised guided tours
- + Specific visitor guidance and visitor facilities for disabled

3 Visitor Restrictions Methods

Methods in order to define whether some nature sites should be closed or limited for access are:

- + Establishment of sample areas for botanical monitoring of locations with rare species > monitoring before, during and after tourism seasons
- + Registration of negative effects along tourism routes
- + Carrying capacity analyses
- + Zoning
- + Others

Romy Sommer, animare projectmanagement



VISITOR MANAGEMENT IN PROTECTED AREAS

Protected areas attract people. Sometimes the protected area management is glad about people who are interested in their work and activities, sometimes protected areas are forced to open up more to the public to improve the number of visitors, and sometimes the pressure of visitors is too strong. In any case the management of a protected area has to care about their “guests”.

Visitor information is important at various levels: Locally it is essential e.g. for tourism development and at regional, national and international levels visitor information is needed for policy, planning and comparisons.

The number of “interested people” depends of course on the activities of the protected area management, but it is also influenced by the concrete location of a protected area: Close to a big city or neighboured to a well developed tourism destination there are “automatically” more visitors coming to the area.

Nowadays visitor management is an important tool, sometimes even the main job within the protected area management.

TASK FIELDS OF VISITOR MANAGEMENT



Visitor management comprises many very different tasks – on the one hand activities to get knowledge about the guests and on the other hand services for visitors to satisfy their expectations.

A successful visitor management requires qualitative knowledge of visitor numbers and activities undertaken in the protected area as well as accurate information on visitors’ needs and wishes. But the situation in most European protected areas shows that a systematic gathering of recreational uses and visitor flows is rarely carried out. Therefore, the demand for qualitative and quantitative, spatially related and standardized data about visitor numbers is striking, in particular for areas with high visitor numbers and for conflict zones.

The aim of visitor management is not only to observe visitors and report about them, but the management has to deal with the visitor flows and activities so that negative impacts on environment and nature resources are minimized. If all tasks are carried out systematically and on a permanent basis it is a monitoring system – often parts of this system, in particular the techniques to gather information about visitors, are also called visitor monitoring.

While monitoring of vegetation and wildlife in protected areas has a long tradition, a systematic monitoring of recreational uses and visitor flows is rarely carried out. However it is widely accepted by park managers to develop at least a visitor management plan – a step towards a comprehensive monitoring system.



Of course, the protected area management can not plan, prepare, organize and conduct all necessary tasks themselves. Regarding pressure and problems coming from tourism related activities it is recommended to develop a system of cooperation between protected areas and tourism operators/businesses. Cooperation can support the visitor management and provide better services and more qualitative information to visitors.



VISITOR COUNTING AND VISITOR SURVEY

The “number of visitors” is the most important data as it is the most essential indicator and basis for various planning and marketing activities. There are several observation and collection techniques and technical tools to gain this information. Each method has its strengths and weaknesses – some experiences are described on page 42 ff.

Methods of visitor counting

Indirect methods:

- + Signs of use: e.g. on tracks, wear and tear on vegetation and terrain
- + Guest books in cabins, trail logs, and other self registration methods
- + Fishing and hunting licenses, permits, parking and entrance fees, statistics and other documents
- + Information from other agencies or companies

Direct methods:

- + Observation by staff at ground level
- + Observations from the air

Automatic methods:

mechanical and electronic counters:

- + Vehicle counters
- + Person counters
- + Electronic counters combined with digital or video cameras.

The knowledge about characteristics, behaviour and wishes of visitors is very important for protected areas. Referring to those data series the management can evaluate them by using the previously defined targets. The determination of targets should be the first task of a monitoring process. On the basis of scientific socio-economic, biological or environmental data, every monitoring can accomplish specific aims. To find out changes in tourism behavior and wishes, to check the carrying capacity of certain zones within the park, to consider changes in population of endangered species or soil erosion caused by tourism, it is very important to repeat the data collection regularly.

Comprehensive knowledge and accurate information on visitors of protected areas are essential not only for the planning and managing of visitor services and tourism infrastructure, but also for the sustainable protection of natural and cultural heritage.



The best way to collect this information is the direct questioning (face-to-face interviews). Unfortunately this technique is time-consuming and cost-intensive. Nevertheless many protected areas conducted already such visitor surveys. But as these polls are usually developed individually for each protected area results are not comparable.

Thus, the project PARKS & BENEFITS developed a common questionnaire and gathered techniques to create a standard and make the results comparable.

A jointly developed questionnaire has been used for the survey in season 2010. The results were disappointing:

- + The conduction of the survey has been too complex and too expensive. Thus not all involved parks carried it out.
- + Many questions were not answered due to long and time-consuming interviews of the visitors.
- + The results gained for the individual protected area was satisfying, but the comparison between protected areas provided only few new information.

Based on this experience a revised questionnaire is now recommended as core for any visitor survey. The questionnaire is obtainable on the website:

> www.parksandbenefits.net

Further lessons learned:

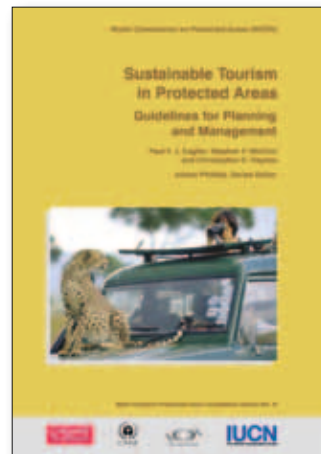
Each survey has to be as short as possible to limit the effort and to avoid any annoyance. The size of the questionnaire is limited to at most two pages.

Any attempt to ascertain data on expenditures for calculation of regional economic effects within a general visitor survey is time-consuming and costly. To include only a few questions dealing with spending behaviour is not sufficient for the economic modeling. On the other hand a long detailed list of possible expenditures takes much time and might not be answered by most visitors. Thus: Surveys to gather the data for an economic impact study should be conducted as stand-alone capture! Such additional surveys offer interesting results.



VISITOR FLOW MANAGEMENT

Visitors can disturb the natural environment. This impact is not always negative and a risk for natural development, but in particular in protected areas this influence has to be observed and managed. Several guidelines are published which recommend tools and techniques to control and limit impacts of usage. Eagles; McCool; Haynes (2002) describe these methods with several practical hints. However, each protected area has to find its own successful way of managing visitor flow – in chapter 2 (page 38ff) protected areas report about their experiences and solutions for visitor management in hot spots.



Visitor Restriction Methods

- + Seasonal or temporal limit on use level
- + Zoning, area closures
- + Restrictions by group characteristics
- + Technology requirements
- + Steering visitor flows by nature trails and roads
- + Park information and interpretation
- + Differential pricing
- + Operator qualifications
- + Tourism marketing

Visitor flow describes the spatial and temporal distribution of visitors in a particular area. The flow management is not limited to restriction methods – an active information policy and guiding tools are often much more effective. Visitor guidance can be put into practice by hardware (e.g. marked trails, signs) or by software (i.e. information, education).



Information

The availability of information is very important. The benefits include data, facts and advices which help inform the visitor about what is happening where in the park and which routes to take. It may result in more visitors adopting appropriate behaviours that will reduce impacts and provide the visitors with a more satisfying visit.

The following tools can be used to provide information to visitors:

- + Printed materials (maps, travel guides, brochures, information boards and sights, journals)
- + Verbal information given by rangers, guides or environmental educators; also radio and TV broadcasting
- + Internet (website of protected area, social networks).



Environmental education and interpretation

A lack of awareness or understanding of nature conservation by local people and visitors cause many problems in the protected areas. Thus, environmental education and interpretation adapted to modern society have to be an integral part of the visitor management. The environmental education activities, which combine ecological knowledge and emotional nature experience, can broaden people's minds; develop new skills for the daily life; promote sustainable behaviour; form understanding of nature processes and their importance both for children and grown-ups. In the long run it may result in preserved nature and cultural heritage, cleaner environment and sustainably minded people.

Prof. Wilhelm Steingrube, Sintija Kordule
University of Greifswald

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SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT TO AND
WITHIN PROTECTED AREAS



- ① CHALLENGES
- ② SOLUTIONS AND STANDARDS
- ③ BEST PRACTICES OF SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT
SOLUTIONS IN PROTECTED AREAS

CHALLENGES

The link between protected areas and sustainable mobility gains more and more public awareness as the solution of transport problems is directly connected to climate and demographic changes, visitor management, carrying capacity and accessibility for all. Best practices for sustainable mobility demonstrate also an important economic factor for protected areas and their surroundings. But up to now, it is neither sufficiently presented in the planning process of park administrations, regional and national administrations nor in the focus of surrounding tourism stakeholders. It is necessary to define what the possibilities and limitations of ecological destinations are, to preserve and not to destroy what visitors come to see. The carrying capacity of each destination needs to be respected in ecological, social and cultural terms.



As strategic partners of the PARKS & BENEFITS project the German Association for Sustainable Mobility (department northeast) together with the University of Roskilde have analysed the sustainable mobility and barrier free accessibility of protected areas involved in the project. At first an analysis of international standards and best practices in protected areas has been carried out including analyses of public transport systems, a problem analysis in terms of carrying capacity and visitor hot spots, information material and barrier free infrastructure.

Furthermore, interviews using a structured questionnaire were conducted to find out, at which level the problem of sustainable mobility is dealt with in each protected area. Field research in the parks and their surroundings also



allowed to get an overview and to compare the current situations. All these results were included into the analysis of the sustainable mobility and were discussed in working groups at the partner meetings. The overall SWOT analysis generated as a result was used to influence the Charter implementation processes of each park in terms of mobility and accessibility requirements.

Based on the experience of the Association for Sustainable Mobility two guidelines “For sustainable mobility” and “For barrier free tourism” have been developed for the PARKS & BENEFITS project. A common strategy for protected areas in the Baltic Sea Region would also be of great benefit. However, the involved parks were too far away from each other and too different to realise this highly ambitious task. A follow-up project could ensure further knowledge transfer and cooperation.

Division into two types of recommendations depending on the ‘density’

One basic result of the project was that the parks needed to be divided into two types of recommendation depending on the “density” of networks to draw comparisons. “High density”-parks are located close to big cities and metropolitan areas, are mostly easily accessible by international and regional train connections or even an airport is located close by. These protected areas require a policy of intelligent mobility to reduce problems of individual traffic by introducing restrictions and/or by supporting cooperation among all stakeholders defined in a master plan. On the other hand parks with low density networks are usually located in remote areas with low infrastructure and low share of public transport. Here small investments in responsible tourism are necessary to avoid that private transport is increasing in future.

Jörg Becken und Phillip Wagner, German Association for Sustainable Mobility (department northeast)



PARKS & BENEFITS PUBLIC TRANSPORT MATRIX

	DOVREFJELL SUNNDALS- FJELLA NATIONAL PARK NORWAY	NATURE PARK MARIBOSØERNE DENMARK	MÜRITZ NATIONAL PARK GERMANY	BIOSPHERE RESERVE SOUTHEAST-RÜGEN GERMANY	ŽEMAITIJA NATIONAL PARK LITHUANIA	MATSALU NATIONAL PARK ESTONIA	ĶEMERI NATIONAL PARK LATVIA	KURTUVĖNAI REGIONAL PARK LITHUANIA
Charta Process	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Location								
...in conurbation...near big city		x	x	x			x	
...in longer distance	x				x	x		x
Accessibility								
...by train	x	x	x	x			x	
...by bus	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
...by bike	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Barrierfree possibilities								
...wheelchair users		x	x	x			x	x
...visual impairment			x					
...hearing impairment								
...mental handicap								
Bicycle long distance trail		x	x					
Bicycle local trail	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Green Certification concerning public transport (Via bono, green certificate)			x				x	
...international					x		x	x
...national								
Special Info-Material for public transport	x	x	x	x			x	

SOLUTIONS AND STANDARDS

Various international organisations have elaborated recommendations on sustainable tourism. Within these frameworks different standards for sustainable mobility have been proposed as well. In the final report of the World Ecotourism Summit, held 2002 in Québec (Canada), a series of recommendations to governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, community-based associations, academic and research institutions, intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, development assistance agencies and indigenous and local communities are included:

“The use of transport to, and within, the destination was a key concern of the preparatory conference in Austria. Where possible, ecotourism should be based on forms of mobility which have low environmental impact. Discussion at the Summit widened the debate on access, with a call for more attention to be paid to facilitating access to rural and natural areas, including mountains, for example through networks of hiking trails.”

In Chapter A “To national, regional and local governments – addressing transport and other access issues” the declaration supports:

“...the further implementation of the international principles, guidelines and codes of ethics for sustainable tourism (e.g. such as those proposed by UNEP, WTO, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and the International Labor Organization) for the enhancement of international

and national legal frameworks, policies and master plans to implement the concept of sustainable development into tourism” (point 15)

and demands to:
“...incorporate sustainable transportation principles in the planning and design of access and transportation systems, and encourage tour operators and the travelling public to make soft mobility choices.” (point 19).

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas promotes the:

“... use of public transport, cycling and walking as an alternative to private cars:
Promotional activities will be carried out to encourage the use of public transport both for access to the protected area and within its boundaries and surroundings. The reduction of traffic by private vehicles, as well as the promotion of cycling and walking will be a priority.” (Principle 10)

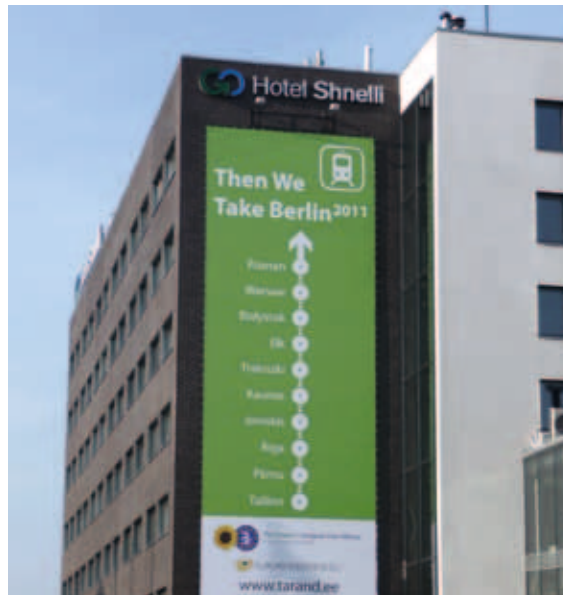
A Part of the Action Plans in the Charter Process should be traffic control:

“Traffic control: Travel to and within the protected area should, wherever possible, be by means of public transport, walking or cycling. The company will therefore provide its customers with information on getting to the sites by public transport. It will also endeavour to arrange assembly points at stations or public transport termini. Moreover, all motorised vehicles used for leisure purposes (e.g. 4 x 4 vehicles) will be excluded from all tourist facilities.”



Improved international and national access

The key point for an environmental friendly mobility system inside protected areas is the possibility to use public transport even before entering the protected areas. Thus, the improvement or development of attractive public transport and modal split is absolutely necessary. Leaving the polluting car at home becomes more attractive, when there are other easy ways to get into nature. Especially for international guests it opens up a wide range of mobility options besides renting a car.



Transfer points with allocating functions like airports, ferry ports and train stations play a major role in this context. Also an important potential for tourism can be seen in improved connection to international biking and hiking routes. Mainly parks, which are very far away from densely populated areas, need 'responsible tourism' corridors connecting different parks and tourism highlights.

Air Traffic

Aviation is an important part of interaction within the Baltic Sea Region and a vital link also to protected areas. Intensified competition, not least in form of low-cost aviation, has pushed prices downwards, resulting in increasing travel: the cheaper the flight connection, the more people travel. Low-cost aviation is indeed a very important factor influencing the contemporary patterns of mobility, also influencing local and regional tourism development. A rapid increase in weekend tourism to cities like Riga and Tallinn has been recorded in the past years, mainly from other Nordic countries, but also from Great Britain and Germany.

International train and road networks

The railway-corridor connecting the Baltic States with Central and Western Europe is called Rail Baltica, which is one of the priority projects of the European Union Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T).

The project is supposed to link Finland, the Baltic States and Poland and also improve the connection between



Central and Eastern Europe and Germany. It envisages a continuous rail link from Tallinn (Estonia), to Warsaw (Poland), going via Riga, (Latvia) and Kaunas, (Lithuania). The linkage between Berlin and Warsaw already exists, while the further connection to Tallinn is emerging. A major problem for environmental friendly transport between the Baltic States is anyhow the train system. Since several years there is no direct train connection between the three capital cities available. Even the new connection between Riga and Minsk leaves out Lithuania, which would be the rather direct way.

The counterpart of Rail Baltica for individual traffic is the Via Baltica, also known as European Route E67. The

Via Baltica is a highway running from Prague in Czech Republic to Helsinki in Finland through Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. It is a significant road connection between the Baltic States. The final stretch between Tallinn and Helsinki is provided by ferry (Scandlines) with about 10 car ferry departures each direction per day. There are plans to convert the roadway into a motorway or expressway.

Rail Baltica could be a sustainable alternative to the planned Via Baltica motorway which has proved to be controversial on environmental grounds. In contrast to Via Baltica, the implementation of the Rail Baltica project could become a good practical example of sustainable and efficient utilisation of the Cohesion and Structural Funds, bringing social and economical benefits, as well as environmental and climatic improvements.

Guidelines for sustainable mobility

The Association of Sustainable Mobility, region northeast elaborated practical guidelines such as a "transportation mission" on sustainable mobility and accessibility for all 8 PARKS & BENEFITS parks.

Support

- + The further implementation of the international principles, guidelines and codes of ethics for sustainable tourism in the international, national and regional legal frameworks, policies and master plans.
- + To implement the concept of sustainable development into mobility and barrier free standards.





Incorporate

- + Sustainable transportation principles in the planning and design of access and transportation systems, and encourage tour operators and the travelling public to make soft mobility choices.
- + Preserve and protect resources while providing safe and enjoyable access within the national parks by using sustainable, appropriate, integrated transportation systems.

Challenge

In many areas access and user demands are exceeding the system's carrying capacity. High visitation levels, at both large and small sites, are causing problems because of the growing volumes of traffic and demands for visitor parking. In many areas, the problem is rather that there are too many motor vehicles and too many visitations are concentrated in certain time periods than too many users in total.

Key

Innovative solutions will be required. A key role to facilitate tourism is a safe, efficient and convenient transportation system allowing easy access and mobility for the visitor to enjoy nature. It provides opportunities for recreational travel and tourism, protects and enhances resources and provides sustained economic development in rural and urban areas.

Alternative Transportation Systems

Explore new innovative, sustainable and appropriate transportation solutions to handle growing traffic demands and reduce resource impacts from the private car. Public transport should be transport for all.

Multimodal Travel

The best guarantee of lasting independent and flexible mobility is having access to use to several modes of transport. The different modules together form an integrated marketing and communication approach. The reduction of traffic by private vehicles as well as the promotion of cycling and walking will be a priority.

Strategy I - Understanding

Fostering an understanding of the complex relationships among tourism and recreational travel; natural, cultural, and historic resource preservation.

Strategy II - Communication

Transportation as well as tourism-related interests need to be communicated to gain a better understanding of each other's perspective. There also need to be a balance between transportation agencies, stakeholders, protected areas and inhabitants to consider environmental, safety and capacity, social and economic effects as well as market effects.

Strategy III – Master plan

- + Identification of alternative techniques, new technologies and implementation methods for serving transportation demand
- + Identification of the characteristics of travel and travellers
- + Evaluation of prospective multimodal systems in a master plan

Guidelines for barrier free accessibility in protected areas

- 1 Embedding the concept of barrier free access in the management plan of the protected area.
- 2 Developing a self-commitment to realize at least one attraction for disabled visitors.
- 3 A variety of programs, exhibits and informational opportunities for all visitors should be provided.
- 4 Whenever possible protected areas have to provide the same opportunities for visitors with disabilities – though in many cases the opportunities are designed specifically for disabled visitors based often on the type of disability.
- 5 They should inform visitors about trails that have been made more accessible to visitors with disabilities.

Jörg Becken und Phillip Wagner, German Association for Sustainable Mobility (Department Northeast)



BEST PRACTICES OF SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT SOLUTIONS IN PROTECTED AREAS

Restrictions and regulations



Toll roads are an opportunity for regulating and reducing car traffic inside national Parks. A private road in Dovrefjell Sunndalsfjella National Park, Norway

Public awareness



The National Park as brand is a useful basis for the cooperation with public transport companies. Train with advertisement for the Müritz National Park

Public transport, modal split, public awareness

Improving public transport for visitors means in particular to increase its frequency at weekends and public holidays, in the summer season as well as in the evening and nighttime hours. Besides, trains or busses should offer the possibility to transport bicycles. The timetable of different means of transport should be harmonized.

Picture 1: Müritz National Park cooperates with local public Transport/public bus capable to transport bicycles. A special National Park Ticket can be used.



Picture 2: Car-free tourism gets more attractive when train stations also accommodate a tourist information.



Railway



To open up ways into nature should be an aim of public transport. Railway in Dovrefjell Sunndalsfjella National Park.



Train station in Oppdal (Norway) accommodating a tourist information, bus stop and bike rental facility.



Encourages visitors to park the car outside the protected area: historical railway in the Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen



Specific buses



Public transport must adapt to the most common leisure activities in protected areas. Buses in Norway, i.e. are capable of transporting skis.

Meeting the needs of tourists as a basic objective of public transport: Buses on Rügen are capable of transporting bicycles during summer season.

Possibilities for hiring bikes



Rent-a-Bike system in Riga promotes use in Jurmala (located nearby Ķemeri National Park). Promoting Bicycle tourism in the National Park might be possible, too.

Hiking and biking routes

The establishment and extension of international hiking and biking routes is of highest importance. Such routes are primarily established as an alternative international network linking major conurbations. However, parks in remote areas need soft corridors with park related hiking and biking routes to connect each other. The integration of nearby railway and/or bus junctions as well as alternative modal-split-based access to the park could also link these protected areas to international hiking and biking routes.



Former railway transformed into biking route near the city of Haapsalu and the Matsalu National Park. Soft tourism corridors like this may connect different cities, protected areas, tourism highlights and even stakeholder.



Cyclists very much appreciate when distances are clearly indicated, i.e. in Nature Park Maribosøerne.

Barrier free access to visitor hot spots

Accessibility should be provided for the visitor centre, campsites, picnic areas and interpretive programs.



Combining nonpolluting transport, accessibility and fun: Facility for disabled to do horse riding in Kurtuvėnai Regional Park, Lithuania



Facilitating the movement of young and old: easily accessible resting place in Müritz National Park, Germany.

Cartographic support for visitors



The cartographic presentations of the Ķemeri National Park near Riga (LV) might serve as an inspirational model for other protected areas. The Ķemeri National Park has several bike, hiking, water and automobile routes. They are indicated in a series of thematic maps for different target groups. The maps are available in the National Park Center and online. In general and apart from its nature reserve zone, the park is open for hikers, plant, animal and landscape watchers, berry and mushroom pickers, swimmer and sun bather as well as cyclists. Within the season, this provokes much traffic and sometimes people illegally drive in the park and damage sensitive areas. With the help of the maps, produced within the PARKS & BENEFITS project, the park sets the focus on alternative means of transport.



ECOLABELLING OF PARTNER TOURISM BUSINESSES

- ① WHY SHOULD TOURISM BUSINESSES GET CERTIFIED?
- ② HOW TO CHOOSE THE MOST APPROPRIATE CERTIFICATION PROGRAMME AND WHERE TO FIND THEM?
- ③ HOW TO GET YOUR TOURISM BUSINESSES CERTIFIED?





Diversity of tourism – diversity of ecolabels

Being still the hottest tourism destination with high quality demands Europe has far more “eco” certification programmes than any other region of the world. More than 50 environmental certificates and awards cover all types of tourism suppliers, including accommodation, beaches, marinas, protected areas, restaurants, handicrafts, golf courses, tour packages and various other tourism-related activities. More than 40 schemes certify accommodation services: hotels with or without restaurants, camping sites, youth hostels, farm houses, alpine huts, holiday houses, guest houses, bed and breakfast lodgings and others.

Conclusion:

In principle, a tourism ecolabel needs a homogeneous product group with clear and common components or services, to ensure that environmental impacts can be compared and rated. The ideal ecolabel requires a set of criteria for “better environmental performance”, which

- + goes beyond what is required by law (national or regional), and
- + is achievable by a significant proportion of the target group of tourism providers in order to provide a real “better choice” to the consumer.



WHY SHOULD TOURISM BUSINESS GET CERTIFIED?

Tourists expect environmental quality

For consumers the environmental quality of the tourism product is very important. Issues such as: clean beaches and clean water, no rubbish and pollution, protected nature, low noise are all very high ranking consumer requirements. Around one third of European tourists prefer to be able to reach a destination by bus or train, and would also prefer to have good public transport at the holiday destination instead of having to use the car. More than 40 % of visitors would like to stay in environmentally-friendly accommodation. One in five tourists would like tour operators, accommodation operators and destinations to clearly indicate their higher environmental quality products with an ecolabel.



Ecolabels shall give a “better choice” to the consumers

The effectiveness of ecolabels at reaching the consumer has been limited so far. The development of the European single market and the task of reaching such a large and wide audience require joint efforts. Ecolabels can be successful if they certify really good environmental quality (“better than none certified”) and provide a suitable choice of products in their countries. In order to maintain effective consumer’s recognition, ecolabels also need to have a reliable verification procedure.

Standards assure the quality of ecolabels

A number of studies have over the last 10 years compared certification programmes to get an overview on the vast market. However all these comprehensive studies are far too comprehensive from a practical viewpoint. The question is still: How shall a business wanting to be certified handle the number of options without having to become an expert on certification?

Susann Plant, animare projectmanagement



HOW TO CHOOSE THE MOST APPROPRIATE CERTIFICATION PROGRAMME AND WHERE TO FIND THEM?

Orientations for practitioners offer the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) – a set of 37 voluntary standards representing the minimum that any tourism business should aspire in order to protect and sustain natural and cultural resources. Criteria and Indicators at:

> www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org

But every destination shows its own characteristics. That is why the ECO-DESTINET group specified these global criteria for the European market. The European Eco-tourism Labelling Standard (EETLS) offers in addition to the 37 universal criteria of GSTC:

- + Applicable sub-criteria for different surroundings: visitor centres, tour packages, accommodation facilities, outdoor activities, restaurants
- + Measures and indicators
- + Tips for practical implementation of the stated criteria “how to do it”
- + Best practice examples
- + A list of assessed labels fulfilling the EETLS standard

The EETLS standard is very well elaborated and can be used as practical guideline. The “Handbook of Eco-tourism labelling criteria and good practice in Europe” is online available at:

> www.ecoroute.eu/destinet/en > Publications

The EETLS criteria in short

A – Group of Criteria

- A.1 Management System
- A.2 Legal Compliance
- A.3 Employee Training
- A.4 Customer Satisfaction
- A.5 Marketing Accuracy
- A.6 Design and construction of buildings and infrastructure
 - A.6.1 Comply with local zoning and protected or heritage area requirements
 - A.6.2 Respect the natural or cultural heritage surroundings in siting, design, impact assessment, and land rights and acquisition
 - A.6.3 Use locally appropriate principles of sustainable construction
 - A.6.4 Provide access for persons with special needs.
- A.7 Interpretation

EETLS – Group of Criteria

- EETLS 1 Compliance of activities with special regulations in protected areas
- EETLS 2 Raise visitors’ sensitivity of the host destination

B – Group of Criteria

- B.1 Community Development
- B.2 Local Employment
- B.3 Local and Fair-Trade Products / Services
- B.4 Local Entrepreneurs
- B.5 Indigenous Communities
- B.6 Exploitation
- B.7 Equitable Hiring
- B.8 Employee Protection
- B.9 Basic Services

C – Group of Criteria

- C.1 Code of Behaviour
- C.2 Historical Artefacts
- C.3 Protection of Sites
- C.4 Incorporation of Culture

D – Group of Criteria

- D.1 Conserving resources
 - D.1.1 Purchasing Policy
 - D.1.2 Consumable Goods
 - D.1.3 Energy Consumption
 - D.1.4 Water Consumption

- D.2 Reducing pollution
 - D.2.1 Greenhouse Gas
 - D.2.2 Wastewater
 - D.2.3 Waste Management Plan
 - D.2.4 The use of chemicals and harmful substances
 - D.2.5 Other Pollutants
- D.3 Conserving biodiversity, ecosystems and landscapes
 - D.3.1 Wildlife Species
 - D.3.2 Wildlife in Captivity
 - D.3.3 Landscaping
 - D.3.4 Biodiversity Conservation
 - D.3.5 Interactions with Wildlife

Proofed ecolabels or certifications are the best way for park administrations to secure the desired quality standard of the businesses they work with.

Susann Plant, animare projectmanagement



HOW TO GET YOUR TOURISM BUSINESSES CERTIFIED?



There is an astonishing variety of labelling options on the European market. Agreeing on one common label as intended at project start, proved to be unrealistic for PARKS & BENEFITS partners. The progresses to establish commonly used certification systems or ecolabels for sustainable tourism products, services and providers vary from country to country to a high extent.

- + In some countries national authorities have put a lot of effort into implementing quality ecolabels – using national labels as well as international ones for all kinds of services. (DK/NO)
- + Others also started various quality initiatives – nationally and regionally – but without coordination between certifying boards and systems and with temporally limited financial funding which resulted in an overwhelming offer of more or less still operating certifications and ecolabels available on the market. (GER)



- + Whereas some countries seem to have a very well organised label market by using just a limited number of national labels but are very hesitant with using internationally recognised ecolabels. (EE/LV)
- + Others in turn are not yet positive about starting a national ecolabel campaign and record a very hesitant use of international certificates and ecolabels. (LT)

In general

- + The degree of labelling progress depends on the economic development and decreases from the North-Western towards the Eastern countries of BSR. The East-Western divide is still very visible regarding the starting level for quality initiatives.
- + As with all international/European legislations: also ecolabelling faces the difficulty of bringing international regulations in agreement with national legislation.

- + The Green Key for tourism facilities is the only international ecolabel that is used in most of the PARKS & BENEFITS partner countries, except for Germany and Norway.
- + The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism meanwhile was adopted by 75 protected areas in eight European countries. Currently 32 more from 10 European countries applied for registration and go through the certification process; the PARKS & BENEFITS partners among them. The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas represents the most widespread and recognized certification tool to guarantee a sustainable quality and eco friendliness of the tourism developments within a park area.

Nevertheless Europarc Federation does not intend to develop an own brand or ecolabel for Charter Park members so far. It lays down the provisions for public private partnership models between protected areas and tourism SMEs within the park area. See Charter Part II at:

> www.european-charter.org

Practical concerns towards a common BSR standard for ecolabels/certificates

- + **Criteria harmonisation** – BSR-wide harmonisation will be difficult to achieve, particularly in relation to different levels of economic development and SMEs' readiness to invest in environmental quality of their services. On the other hand service providers can at least be asked to use products meeting certain criteria, based on the EETLS Ecolabel criteria.



- + **Awareness** of ecolabels remains low in certain areas, and a greater promotional push for ecolabels is needed to boost demand. Currently, especially in eastern and southern European countries, consumers will not spend more money to buy ecolabelled products.
- + **Certification** can be a problem, especially for smaller companies. Innovation is usually driven by small companies, but the complexity of the certification process is comparatively a higher burden for such companies who are less able to absorb the administrative resources needed.

Susann Plant, animare projectmanagement



DEVELOPING AND MARKETING ECOTOURISM PRODUCTS



- ① TRENDS IN NATURE TOURISM
- ② SPECIAL CHALLENGES OF MARKETING PROTECTED AREAS AND GUERILLA MARKETING STRATEGIES
- ③ EXAMPLES OF TOURISM PRODUCTS AND MARKETING OF NATURE TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS

TRENDS IN NATURE TOURISM

The term "nature-based tourism" refers to the enduring appeal of great natural heritage sites for tourists world-wide – perhaps more than ever before. Various studies have analysed and discussed its potential and the challenges for the regions and especially for park managements as the numbers of visitors in national parks has increased strongly over the past decades.

Knowledge about visitors and trends in nature tourism are vitally important to design park management strategies that are relevant for the future and sustainable. But also when developing tourism products a special focus must be put on the needs of the target groups that shall be attracted. Many park authorities nowadays better

understand that park visitors have service needs and quality expectations and know that analyses of visitor satisfaction lead to a better understanding of the visitor. However, limited budget and staff does have an impact on scope and regularity of surveys and further trainings. The needs and demands of visitors are changing and follow certain lifestyle trends. Today's target groups and their way of life can be classified and summarized as follows¹:

Creative Class	Millennials	LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability)	Golden generation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Higher service demand+ Luxury-oriented+ Technology-affine+ Self-employed+ Small entrepreneurs+ High-skill worker+ Active+ Communicative+ Enjoyable+ Inspiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Born in the 80s+ Post-TV generation+ Technology-affine and very connected+ Digital lifestyle+ Very health conscious+ Part of the trend "new middle class"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Hybrid lifestyle: health and enjoyment+ Awareness of sustainability+ Technology-affine+ Conscious of internal values and optimistic+ Green lifestyle+ Spiritually oriented+ Holistic needs and perceptions of reality+ Authenticity is very important	<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Represent the social majority in the future: time rich, money, rich!+ Experienced – but not experienced consumers+ Sophisticated and interested+ No senior citizen's resorts+ Communication and service is important

Generally it can be stated that today's target groups have a greater environmental awareness. Nature tourism and getting back to the roots becomes increasingly important. Deceleration during holidays plays an important role in the hectic reality which most people are living in. At the same time these target groups are having a lot of travel experience resulting in a high quality demand.

Typical nature and outdoor enthusiasts therefore can be summarized as follows²:

- + Trend to middle and younger age groups
- + Middle to higher income
- + Live more often than average in three- and four-person households
- + Most have a middle or high school diploma and are working
- + Information and communication technologies are a natural part of everyday life

- + Both experiential and family-oriented: have strong sense of responsibility for themselves and their family
- + Cultural interest and social engagement: sensitivity to social issues
- + Strong interest in nature, the environment and sustainability: favor outdoor activities (such as bike and hike, bird watching); want to experience natural phenomena and learn about nature.
- + Create an understanding of ecology: enjoy an intact and healthy environment as possible; are experience-oriented and environmentally conscious
- + More than a third enjoys more than one extended vacation per year
- + Enjoy meeting people with similar interests.



The following facts are of importance for nature tourists when developing products for them:

- + Target group for “conscious travelling”: unpolluted environment is seen as a prerequisite for personal enjoyment of nature, wellness and healthy nutrition
- + Search for authentic experiences in the most pristine natural settings and willingness to spend more money for this purpose
- + Want to combine their nature experience with culture and other activities
- + Hospitality is of high value: it is still one of the major reasons for tourists to visit a destination!
- + Alternative modes of transport are welcomed if mobility is secured at site
- + Protected areas in general are beautiful at every time of the year. Nature can be experienced very differently depending on the seasons and daytime.
- + Nature conservation: visitors need and want information about the protected area
- + Look for certain comfort and quality tourism infrastructure that is used by local population too
- + Prefer authentic, nature-orientated and environmentally-friendly accommodations
- + Look for the contrast to their every day life and want to get in touch with inhabitants. They want to escape to a different world than their daily routine.
- + Fun and freedom, naturalness and authenticity are important
- + Individuality is important, nature tourists don’t want to travel in large groups; smaller groups or individual trips are preferred. More and more niche tour operators offer smaller group tours from 8 persons up;

and there are also tours for individuals available. Main objective of all their offered tours is to let nature be nature.

- + Activities such as cycling, hiking, canoeing should be always included in the product! Usually the daily activities are discussed in a common feedback round in the evening.
- + Nature tourists don’t go into mass tourism infected areas.
- + Families generally have small budgets and are very price conscious. Holidays with the whole family must be children friendly holidays.
- + Prefer regional products and healthy cuisine
- + Prefer offers for “Health and Wellness”
- + Ask for the adventure of nature: experiences with all sense.



Park managements and tourism associations are increasingly aware of the fact that tourism that aims at outstanding natural heritage sites is able to change the view and understanding of the local population concerning the benefits of conserving the environment. Thus, it is crucial to involve all relevant stakeholders from the beginning and continuously into the decision making processes and define boundaries of tourism and nature conservation clearly. In a first step, however, the local conditions need to be described and analysed comprehensively. In order to do so, park administrations need to consider the following trends as well³:

- + Demographic changes will result in increasing numbers of older visitors and a change in activities, settings and experiences sought by the visitors
- + Increased accessibility of information technology will lead to a better level of information of (potential) visitors in terms of leisure and outdoor activities in the park area, management strategies etc.
- + Increasing availability of information technology profoundly influences park visitation
- + Advances in the technology of travel and reductions in costs will result in increased demand for protected areas that might be more distant from ones residence
- + Protected area managements develop increased sophistication in their understanding and management of park visitation and tourism
- + The world’s international travel will be strongly affected by decreasing supplies of oil and gas and large increases in energy cost in the second decade of the 21st century, and
- + Parks increasingly recognised as cultural icons.

To put it in the general words of German futurologist Horst Opaschowski: In the future a silent lake without any events connected to it could be a tourism event for itself. The lake has existed for hundreds of years, but by altering the emotional response, it is interesting again.

Sandra Fieber, animare projectmanagement

¹ Thomas Feil, dwif-Consulting GmbH, presentation at PARKS & BENEFITS marketing workshop in Berlin (GER) 03.12.2009

² Thomas Feil, dwif-Consulting GmbH, presentation at PARKS & BENEFITS marketing workshop in Berlin (GER) 03.12.2009 and INVENT-Tourismus: Innovative Vermarktungskonzepte nachhaltiger Tourismusangebote für den Massenmarkt – Forschungsprojekt > www.invent-tourismus.de

³ Recreation and tourism trends.
> www.sustainabletourisonline.com

⁴ Weitlaner, Wolfgang (04.07.2009): Globaler Trend zum Naturtourismus. > www.pressestext.com



SPECIAL CHALLENGES OF MARKETING PROTECTED AREAS AND GUERRILLA MARKETING STRATEGIES

Protected areas meet the following challenges when marketing their tourism offers:

- + Protected areas today need to concentrate on different target groups such as day-trippers, weekenders and those spending their annual holiday at the park. Therefore there is a need to develop different products adjusted to the different target groups and individual needs.
- + The main problem for parks is the lack of predictability of their visitors.
- + There are often small businesses in and around protected areas with very limited resources for marketing, which is in contrast to the variety of target groups that need to be attracted.
- + Parks usually don't see themselves as tourist destinations and seldom have a marketing platform. Often they don't even cooperate with tourist boards.

Guerrilla marketing strategies are usually unexpected, unconventional and potentially interactive. The main focus hereby is put on the development of a unique, engaging and thought-provoking concept to generate awareness with rather low use of financial resources. The following examples could be part of simple but effective guerrilla marketing strategies.

Direct marketing:

- + Practice a close cooperation with your local tourist office(s) to sell new products and market the region
- + Send flowers or giveaways to potential costumers: e.g. to companies in order to market incentive tours



- + Visit your costumers/bigger companies and organize pre-visits; have a dialogue, ask them what their needs are when organising tailor-made products and prepare detailed action plans for them

Further means of Guerrilla-Marketing:

- + An important tool is the development of a marketing data base, including customer information
- + Newspapers, radio and TV: provide them with stories
- + Merchandising: possible for school classes; interest groups and companies

Newsletters with special offers

Set time limits on all offers

Have in mind

- + Define your USP – concrete and unique and bring it into agreement with the local opinion!
- + Profiles of target groups change continuously and often don't fit into schemes – never work alone: consistently integrate and cooperate with local tourism stakeholders, tourism service providers, tourist information centres and regional/national tourist boards
- + Don't combine all activities: choose/select market segments and offer specialized products to your target groups



- + Use activities such as fishing, camping, canoeing in different settings
- + Always be clear about your target group needs and wishes
- + Make sure that you know who your target group really is, e.g. it is not the school class, but the management of the school that does make the decision. Start with 2-3 weekends per season to offer products that are completely adjusted to the needs of the costumers
- + Communication: use the target group's language and social media marketing (e.g. facebook)
- + Create emotions to win your target group (e.g. use people in your pictures)

How to get started/recommendations

- + It is better to work with groups than single hikers/with families than singles/with companies who book arrangements for a whole day – they are simply better predictable
- + You have to be sure about your visitor numbers before you talk to the tourist offices and stakeholders and of course before you develop a strategy
- + Always keep it simple and talk to potential customers directly (if possible)
- + Continue with successful activities: contact former costumers, talk to colleagues, use social networks and companies you know

*Klaas van Ommeren, Dovrefjell Sunndalsfjella National Park
Sandra Fieber, animare projectmanagement*



EXAMPLES OF TOURISM PRODUCTS AND MARKETING OF NATURE TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS



BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY AND SUSTAINABLE NATURE TOURISM ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT IN LATVIAN NATURE AREAS

Animal watching

There is a considerable density of animals (mammals) in Latvia. However, due to their cautious behaviour animals cannot be easily spotted. This difficulty makes animal watching especially exciting since the goal (experiencing the animal) cannot be guaranteed. Specialised local nature guides who know behaviour and habits of animals living in particular locations can help visitors.

- + Remember that animal watching is a time consuming activity requiring patience and determination. Usually animal watchers use hides or lookout towers. They wear outfits in modest colours that do not make rustling sounds. Animal watchers avoid making noise.
- + A nature guide has to know the locations where the animals are likely to be seen (e.g. feeding grounds, mating spots), has to be able to notice and show animal traces (such as footprints, “bathrooms”, excrements). The guide should share exciting stories about animal life.
- + The guide makes sure that animal watching activities do not disturb the animals and do not make them leave the area. Thus, the guide has to “assess” the visitors and decide to what extent the habitat or actual location ought to be visited on each particular tour.
- + Animal watching can be organised only in small groups (few participants).
- + Animal watchers should not disturb animals in their dens.
- + Returning from animal watching, only positive emotions and photos should be taken along. Respect all living creatures!
- + Make a list of animals which can be seen in the vicinity of your tourist facility and add the best photos you have made.

Bird watching

Bird watching is one of the most popular nature watching activities attracting kids as well as adults. Bird species which are rare or even extinct in Europe can be observed

in Latvia comparatively frequently. Any season is suitable for bird watching. The greatest variety of bird species can be observed during spring and autumn migrations as well as during nesting.

- + Do not show nesting sites of rare and protected bird species.
- + Learn to recognise birds not only by their looks but also by their singing. Use available recordings of bird songs and take them along on your bird watching tours.
- + Collect exciting stories about birds and share them with visitors.
- + Make a list of bird species which can be seen in the vicinity of your tourist facility and put the list on your website.



- + Make thematic bird watching tours; birds living in meadows, in forests, by inland waters and seacoast, in marshes, and about bird life in different seasons of a year.
- + Always keep in mind that bird interests are the priority. Avoid disturbing their life and habitat.
- + Use bird watching towers or other platforms to overlook larger areas and spot more bird species.
- + In winter, put out bird tables to attract birds with some food. In spring, install bird houses of different types and sizes. Make an owl house!

Insect watching

Insects are the most multiform group of organisms in the world with nearly a million species known at present. Also in Latvia insects represent the highest number of species. They are all around us and they can be seen any time, except winter, when comparatively few species can be observed. Insects play a significant role in human life therefore it is worth getting to know them closer!

- + Capture insects without doing harm. Use a sweep-net, a strainer, light in the evening or night.
- + Invite entomologists to join your insect watching sessions. The experts will tell lots of stories about our tiny, little-known neighbours.
- + Insects can be best watched in open areas, meadows, forests, near waters and in water, on trees and inside trees or in residential areas. The largest numbers and variety of insects can be observed on warm and sunny days.



- + Make a list of insect species observed in the surroundings and make a photo gallery.
- + While “hunting” for insects, do not damage or change their habitat.
- + Insect watching does not mean collecting them. Take only good memories and photos with you.

Plant watching

There are over 5.500 plant species in Latvia. How many plants can we tell? Learn to identify the most widespread species of algae, lichen, moss, club-moss, horsetail fern and flowering plants. If you live outside the city, hundreds of plant species can certainly be found in your surroundings!



- + Base your plant watching tours mainly on species which are widespread and found all around.
- + If you reveal and show habitats of rare and protected plant species, make sure that their future existence is not threatened.
- + Tell a captivating story about each plant species you show – where people use it, what is its role in human life. May be it is even related to some historical events.
- + Make a list of plant species and put it on your web site.
- + Make a plant finder folder with photos of the most widespread plants in the vicinity.
- + Make thematic nature tours about plants growing in meadows, forests, by waters, in marshes, and about how plants look, adapt and survive in different seasons of a year – in winter, spring, summer and autumn.
- + At the end of your nature tour, treat your guests with a tasty local herb tea.

Mushroom “hunting”

More than 4.000 mushroom species are found in Latvia while only about 1% of them are regarded as edible. Mushrooms are unusual organisms, and their role is significant because many of them, like polypore, disintegrate wood and take part in substance circulation. There is great variety of shapes and colours of mushrooms, that's why it is exciting to explore them.

- + Learn about mushroom species found in your surroundings. Ask people who know mushrooms to help you identify the species you have found. They will be able to tell interesting facts about mushrooms.

- + Try to find an interesting and captivating story about each of the mushroom species.
- + Collect local recipes of mushroom dishes.
- + Make your mushroom finder folder with photos of the most widespread mushrooms in the vicinity.
- + Make thematic nature tours about mushrooms growing in different seasons – in winter, spring, summer and autumn, about poisonous and edible mushrooms, etc.
- + Offer the “mushroom finder leaflet” to your guests as well as a magnifying glass and a place where they can arrange and examine the mushrooms they have picked.
- + If you wish to pick a mushroom in order to taste it or to identify, cut it carefully using your knife without damaging mycelium.
- + If you are not sure if the mushrooms are poisonous or not, leave them in the forest.
- + At the end of the tour, offer some tasty dish from well known, local, edible mushrooms.

Secular trees, outstanding, unusual and historical trees

An old tree represents a whole miniature world of biological diversity. Hundreds of plants, mushrooms and animal species can live on it. The older the tree is, the more valuable it is for nature. Latvian traditions and rituals are linked with particular tree species. There are trees – “witnesses” of historical events.

- + Make an information plate for the tree: its name, dimensions, a captivating story, historical photos, describe



the tree's “inhabitants” – such as lichen, moss, mushrooms, birds, insects.

- + Mention the protection status of the tree, if it is a nature monument or a cultural monument.
- + If the tree has large, open hollows, cover them with natural material to prevent wind and snow getting inside. Otherwise the tree will decay and die.
- + Make a fence around the tree in the width of its crown. It will protect the trees' roots from farm animals and agricultural machinery.
- + If necessary, prop up the largest branches to prevent them from breaking.
- + Install an owl house on an old oak tree. This way you will attract new bird species to your area.
- + Develop codes of conduct for visitors coming to the tree.



Rock outcrops, caves

The sandstone and dolomite in Latvia was formed in the Devonian period, more than 300 million years ago. Outcrops of these sedimentary rocks are important habitats for algae, moss, lichen, insects, and some bird species. Caves in these outcrops are unique habitats for very particular populations of plants and living creatures. Several bat species hibernate in caves.

- + To learn about a rock outcrop, visitors do not need to get up and walk on it.
- + Do not damage rock outcrops and do not try to search for fossils in them.
- + Caves in Latvia are too small to take visitors. Besides, they represent highly sensitive biotopes, especially during hibernation of bats.

Ten basic steps in making active and nature touring routes

The present methodology is developed and tested when planning hiking, boating and cycling routes in the national parks of Latvia as well as in other protected nature areas/Natura 2000 sites in Latvia. The routes are meant mainly for independent travellers. Animal and plant watching tours can be organised with or without an expert nature guide. The 10 steps described below will help in structuring and optimising your work when planning and describing hiking, boating and cycling routes for independent travellers.

1 Concept of the route

To develop an active tourism route, first you need a brilliant idea and a vision. What area will the route cross, where are the starting and end points? What is the theme of the route (nature, landscape, birds, insects, other)? How will travellers get to the starting point and how will they depart at the end (or how will they return to the starting point)?

2 Exploring maps and reference literature

Once you have the concept, start checking all available information. Use maps of different scale, travel guides, information brochures and websites. The main aim of this step is to discover or understand actual or potentially attractive tourism resources and supporting infrastructure (accommodations, nature trails, bird watching towers, food services, shops, attraction sites and camping sites) that already exist in the territory of your route.

3 Drafting the route

Mark your route on the map, linking the previously mentioned tourist attraction sites/nature watching spots. Preferably use maps of the following scale: 1:200 000 (mainly for cycling routes crossing large areas and following main roads), 1:100 000 (shorter routes within one region and following minor roads) or 1:50 000 (local and short routes following small roads, inclusive forest roads and/or trails). The last two scales are suitable for nature watching routes as nature watchers usually prefer to stay in the same area.

4 Testing the route in different seasons of the year

After the route is marked on the map, it has to be tested on site to understand its strengths and weaknesses, as well as to see the conditions which cannot be predicted during the deskwork process. It is advisable to test your active tourism route in spring (April – May when you are able to assess the condition of gravel and sandy roads after winter), in summer and in early autumn (when there is rich vegetation). Examining the route in different seasons will provide valuable extra information to be included in the technical description of the route (see below). If the tour focuses on particular groups of plants or animals, you should be aware what can be found in the area during different months of a year. You will be able to see particular species of insects, plants, mushrooms and birds only in particular months.

5 Modifications

Usually, after you have done the first on site testing, you get new ideas for improvements, changes and alternatives. At this stage you will develop the 1st draft of the technical route description.

6 Testing the route with potential tourists

After the first 5 steps, it is recommendable to test the route in a group of people with different fitness levels, including children. Each participant will give suggestions (also regarding the attraction sites, species and others), objective or subjective criticism. It is worth listening and, if necessary, to make corrections with or along the route or in its written description.

7 Itinerary – technical description

The next step is writing the technical description. It is a practical information sheet which can easily be sent by e-mail, put on a web site, in social network sites, or printed. Use the following structure for the description:

Route: Brief characteristic of the route stressing its “unique selling point”;

Recommended season: The most suitable time of the year or the best months to enjoy the route;

Level of difficulty:

- + Easy – suitable for all fitness levels. Usually crosses relatively flat terrain, does not require orienteering skills;
- + Medium – longer routes, more difficult terrain;
- + Hard – longer routes in hilly terrain, by steep and high riverbanks, requiring certain fitness levels;

Duration: Approximate length in hours or days in which an “average” tourist can cover the route;

Road surface: The road base on which you walk, ride or drive. Possibilities for wheel chairs and prams. Mark approximate % of paved and unpaved road surface en route.

Start/end point: Name and mark the starting and finishing points of the route;

Marking: Tell if the route is marked and describe the marking signs;

Route itinerary: List the most significant villages/towns and distances between them, as well as give the total length of the route;

Useful services: Shops, cash dispensers, places where one can get drinking water, etc.;



Alternatives: Suggestions of modified versions of the route, attractions and places of interest around the route, etc;

Logistics: How to return from the end point to the starting point, if relevant;

Sites of interest: Nature, culture and historical sites worth seeing en route;

Maps of relevant scale and photos from the sites en route

Good to know! Useful tips and recommendations for travellers

If it is a nature watching tour, the descriptions should name and briefly characterise the plant and animal species which, at appropriate conditions, can be spotted “for guarantee”. It means that a List of Species and Green Advise can be added to the route description.

> www.celotajs.lv

How to design a route description sheet?

You can produce visually attractive, clear and practical route description using open source software (available as free download in the Internet). The advantage is that you can make any necessary changes yourself quickly, easily and with no extra costs, without buying services of IT specialists or designers.

8 Involving other businesses and stakeholders

If it is a hiking, boating or cycling route crossing several regions, the route description should be sent to eventual partners – businesses, tourist information centres, municipalities, administrations of protected nature areas and other stakeholders to review the route, comment on it and provide information on the services they can provide to visitors (food service, accommodation, tasting of countryside produce, attraction sites or craft shops). Use the recommendations that are practical and useful in the route description. When the route description is ready, send the final version to your cooperation partners. They can put it in their web sites, print out and offer to their visitors/guests. It is worth to involve providers of services in the process of planning your nature watching routes.

9 Marking the route

Routes for independent travellers crossing wooded areas can be marked with paint on trees. This should be approved with the owner or manager of the land. In case of protected nature areas and Natura 2000

sites marking has to be approved with the Nature Conservation Agency. After marking, it is worth to test the route again to check if the marking is sufficient and, if necessary, improve it.

10 Maintenance of the route and updating of information

If you advertise a particular route or take visitors on it, you have to check it several times during the season to be aware of the road condition and other circumstances. If necessary, fallen tree trunks and branches should be removed from the road, marking shall be renewed, or other maintenance works done as required. Involve the most active local people in maintaining the route.

This model of how to make touring routes has been proven in practice. Of course, if you are well experienced in developing touring routes, you can leave out some of the steps. In any case, the most important is to check the route on site and involve local stakeholders in the route development and maintenance process.

Asnate Ziemele, Lauku Celotajs

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DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING OF HIKING TRAILS IN THE MECKLENBURG LAKE DISTRICT IN GERMANY

Hiking as a leisure activity has undergone a great renaissance in Germany. For a long time, hiking was considered to be an exercise for mainly elderly people, but some time ago it experienced a significant image shift. Today, more and more younger people between 20 and 40 discover hiking as an appropriate sport for themselves.

In 2010, the Mecklenburg Lake District was placed 22 in the ranking of the market analysis "Destination Brand" in which 120 holiday resorts from all over Germany participated. The region even ranked 14 in the category "holidays spent in nature". The study revealed that 56% of Germans favour the Mecklenburg Lake District for hiking.

Being surprised about this excellent position the Tourist Board decided to focus stronger on hiking in its marketing strategy and to prepare a hiking brochure for guests visiting the region.

In the frame of the PARKS & BENEFITS project an analysis was carried out for the Mecklenburg Lake District in a first step. Various institutions, among them tourist information centers, municipalities, nature parks and the Müritz National Park were questioned. The Müritz National Park and numerous tourist information centers have already published brochures about hiking. However, quite a number of hiking trails lacked clear signposting and information about interconnections.

The Tourist Board has decided to publish only premium trails with excellent signposting, attractive sceneries and convenient transport connections in the brochure.

The Müritz National Park hiking trail with a length of 165 km was included in the quality certification as part of the Charter process. For this reason, the routing of the National Park trail was changed to comply with the German Hiking Association's quality requirements. The decision about the certification will be taken in January 2012. Additionally, the Müritz National Park developed 5 hiking trails which can be experienced with the help of a GPS guide available to the visitors of the National Park since May 2011.

The Tourist Board set up a hiking brochure supported by materials and inputs of the various institutions. The Müritz National Park hiking trail as well as 14 other hiking trails of the region are listed in here. The description of each hiking tour contains an introduction, various pictures, a map, information on places of interests along the route and information on the course of the trail as well as the characteristics of the trail itself. In addition, the brochure contains tips and addresses of national parks and tourism information centers.

The publication of the brochure "Hiking in the Land of Thousand Lakes" in March 2011 was very much appreciated by guests visiting this region. The unexpectedly high demand has already made it necessary to consider publishing a second edition.

The second most important concern of the Tourist Board was to develop a new mission statement in the context of the Charter process of the Müritz National Park (2009 – 2010). About 50 different key players such as



the Müritz National Park, tourism experts of the region as well as regional planning authorities and municipalities had been participating. Supervised by an external expert, the following new guidelines have been defined:

- + The tourist destination "Mecklenburg Lake District" will turn into a strong trademark in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
- + The region is characterized by a multitude of lakes and so-called "national natural landscapes" in which the logos "holiday spent in nature, health tourism and cultural tourism" should be further developed and protected.
- + The unique landscape and the specific natural environment are an essential basis and should be preserved and protected as such in the long run.



- + In order to increase competitiveness and improve quality a stronger focus will be put on service and innovative developments.
- + In the future, more all-year-round offers are to be developed to make the region more attractive for visitors and locals.
- + People living in the region will profit from improved living conditions generated by making this region more attractive for tourists.
- + All measures aim at a timely response to the impacts of the socio-demographic changes in order to be able to counteract them.

Today, there are already considerations to develop the mission statement of the Mecklenburg Lake District further aiming for the status “climate-friendly region” in the long run. To achieve this, i.e. more attractive public transport opportunities and e-bike projects need to be designed in order to drastically reduce traffic density in the region.

The Tourist Board has revised its website which now provides not only further information on the mission statement and guidelines but also allows to market offers for hiking, nature tourism in general and holiday package especially for handicapped people more targeted.

Sirja Wildermann, Tourist Board Mecklenburg Lake District

TAILOR-MADE RIDING PRODUCTS FOR DISABLED IN KURTUVĖNAI REGIONAL PARK, LITHUANIA

It is more than ten years already, since the Horse Riding Centre of the Directorate of Kurtuvėnai Regional Park has been established at the former horse stable of Count Plater-Zyberk. It is one of the few places in Lithuania where horse tourism and professional equestrian sports are cultivated simultaneously. However, sporting achievements are not the main purpose of the Horse Centre. The park seeks to provide its visitors with a largest possible range of services from the first acquaintance with a horse



and rides in carriages to horse riding tours in the surrounding of Kurtuvėnai Regional Park. Persons who want to learn more about horses, to spend more time with them and improve their riding skills, are more than welcome to attend a horse riding school or summer riding camps.

Tourists are not the only ones to enjoy horse riding in Kurtuvėnai. Being among horses, observing and touching them is a therapy tool for many psychiatric patients. When riding a horse, children with movement disabilities are able to feel their body better and train the weak muscles. Šaukėnai Psychiatric Hospital has been using the service of the Centre for more than ten years, while the Riding for the Disabled Association was established in 2007. The Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education practise hippo therapy here and study the impact of riding on patients with cerebral palsy.

The experience acquired and the needs of the patients' families and visitors encouraged the park to consider a wider adaptation of the environment and service to people with special needs. Currently there is a possibility to accommodate disabled people in a campsite or privately in homes of local residents. The Directorate of Kurtuvėnai Regional Park has developed a project, in which an arena is being constructed with changing rooms, medical-therapeutic room, conference hall and rehabilitation equipment for the disabled persons. It is located next to the Horse Riding Centre. The project PARKS & BENEFITS provided the Directorate with an opportunity to invest in the adaptation of tourist attraction sites and creation of new services.

Today, Kurtuvėnai Regional Park can invite the disabled visitors for a horse ride or a carriage ride. A fenced riding field and a new ramp will help visitors to get on the horse safely. In order to get acquainted with Kurtuvėnai manor estate, visitors can ride in a carriage and listen to a guide. There is also a tour available exploring the surrounding of Kurtuvėnai Regional Park, inviting visitors to admire the aquaculture ponds, to visit a stone with a footprint and/or to observe water birds. The park has already tested these tours during a summer camp for disabled children assessing e.g. the distance that can be walked together, how often a rest needs to be made, what is interesting and what inspires to find out more. Thus, a new demand for accompanying family members was defined – to ride a bicycle. Educational programmes have been tested in a similar way: e.g. wax candles were made, the flora of natural and cultural meadows was explored or



herbal soup was cooked. It is very important that the programme guides understand and assess physical abilities of the visitors, the increased expenditure of time or the help required from accompanying persons. Therefore, the president of the Riding for the Disabled Association informed the employees of the Regional Park about special needs of the disabled and about everything that should be taken into account when working and communicating with the visitors. In the future, the visitors will not only be able to admire the manor estate, but also visit other objects of the Park, because a bridge to be constructed across the river in Juodlė lake path will enable the visitors to travel both on foot and in wheelchairs. Benches and stairs will be helpful for the elderly or people with walking difficulties.

PARKS & BENEFITS is a stimulus in serving visitors with special needs in Kurtuvėnai Regional Park, whereas the experience gathered in tours and summer camps will improve the quality of the service.

Jurgita Bartkuvienė, Kurtuvėnai Regional Park



A MARKETING PLATFORM AS A TOOL TO ATTRACT TOURIST STAKEHOLDERS TO JOIN THE CHARTER AND FOLLOW ECO-STANDARDS

The strategic decision to use the marketing platform as a tool to attract tourism stakeholders was based on the following facts or symptoms:

- + Most of the more than 100 different key stakeholders were thinking along patterns of administrative and geographical administration as well as thinking along the line of different professional fields and sectors.
- + The geographical spreading across 4 counties had an important impact on the management of the area:
 - In terms of county/regional tourism management
 - In terms of local tourism management
 - In terms of effective National Park management and administration.
- + Within the context of an effective visitor strategy relevant information about the National Park area towards different visitor and interest groups were published on 11 different websites. Most of the information was in general terms or only information regarding specialized professional disciplines.
- + In addition to the above mentioned information flaws there was a general lack of target group thinking. Almost all local tourist offices around the area have been thinking in terms of marketing abroad while the

traffic in most of the local areas comes from more than 60 % from domestic (Norwegian) visitors. At the same time very little visitor information was produced in the language of the most important foreign markets. Also the information at the National Park Visitor Centres around Dovrefjell was mostly in Norwegian.

- + There were too many tourism development projects in the area without an overall and coordinated strategy.
- + All municipalities/villages around the Dovrefjell National Park area were peripheral destinations within their respective counties, except from Rauma.
- + Without an overall and coordinated operative strategy it is very difficult to develop a sound visitor strategy based on the principles of sustainable development and preconditions for economic and social development.
- + A number of functions connected to the management of the Dovrefjell National Park area are delivered or served by a number of organisations and management levels. This hampered the management effectiveness of the Dovrefjell National Park administration.
- + On the other hand an internal management evaluation as well as a national evaluation and benchmarking with 4 different National Park administration models concludes that the management model of the Dovrefjell Council and administration – with a local and overall coordinating management and policy making body –

was far more effective, had a higher degree of management quality and stood for a higher standard of work with sustainable development according to the national guidelines from the Directorate of Nature Management.

Overall solution through three strategic steps

Strategic step I

- + Developing one marketing- and web platform
 - + across organisational county, municipality and administrative borders
 - + but accordingly to the visitor's/customer's way of planning and thinking
 - + in order to ensure sustainability all businesses connecting have to certify getting a Norwegian Ecolabel (eco lighthouse)
- Due to this platform all areas and businesses could get an equal strategic importance within the national park area as an important tourist attraction and tourist destination.

Strategic step II

- + Acceptance of different strategic situations in the 8 municipalities involved, but use of the same type of strategic methodology for the different municipalities and stakeholders
- + Divide the national park into strategic development areas (= not along the lines of administration but of function)
- + Present a strategic audit for every municipality and tourist area



- + “internal” marketing towards stakeholders in a first phase is as equally important as the marketing work towards external target visitor groups.
- + Take the consequences of a lack of overall strategy and invite to a new way of working which results in a new positive motivation among the tourism related stakeholders.

Strategic step III

- + Use the Charter process as a guide and management tool in order to develop the Dovrefjell National Park area as an area with economic and social development within the framework of sustainable development, thinking and implementation.
- + Marketing the strategic tasks for the National Park Area for the next 5 years, implementing the Charter program.

Visitors' planning process	Marketing and information task
Start planning and wishing	Information, mainly a cost-effective website and to some extent planning brochures/ leaflets: the latter with main objective to direct visitors to the website
Choosing destination or area	Attractive and concrete information highlighting the Dovrefjell National Park area's natural beauty, places to visit, overview of activities in and around the national park area
Planning	Delivering support with concrete information on, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ how to get to Dovrefjell, inclusive how to get to the area by public transport+ where to stay+ what to do Key: providing a number of opportunities to get additional information = leaving contact information so that both tourist offices and business can follow up towards the visitor In addition to the web based information there will be produced small planning and booking brochures distributed through the tourist offices
Enjoying	Providing information and planning tools <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ signboards, sign and marked trails+ maps+ information on organised trips
Share memories	Using social media: Facebook and later on Zoover as well.

The most important strategic step: the marketing platform

Interviews with a number of SMEs revealed that the majority of the businesses would not start to invest in sustainable practice or an ecolabel without any upside in terms of market potential or more turnover/profits. The main objective for the marketing platform was to integrate the marketing platform into the following marketing tasks, based on the visitors planning and buying circle as shown on the following page.

Strategic results

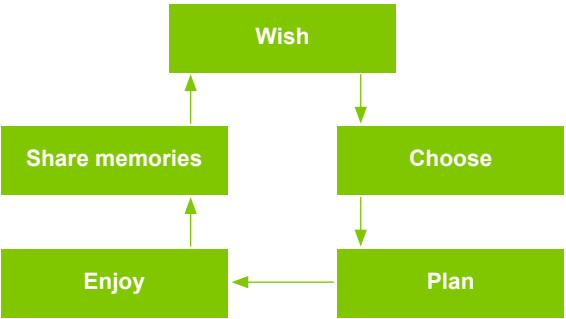
Strategic result I

By implementing the above mentioned strategic measures in connection with the Charter process as a guide and implementation tool the Dovrefjell National Park administration can develop a nature based tourism destination where there is a balance between

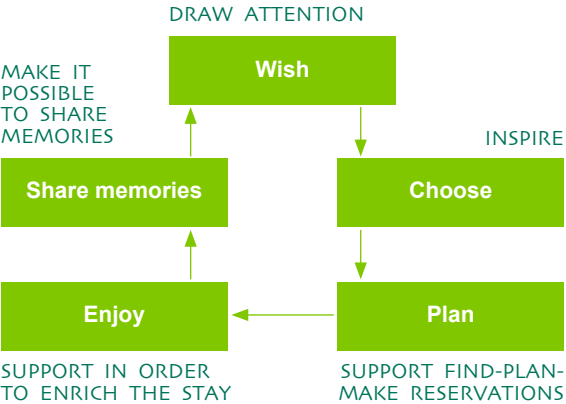
- + Sustainable visitor behaviour,
- + Effective conservation linked to monitoring and evaluation activities and
- + Sustainable socio- economic development in the border zones and municipalities around the national park area.

Strategic result II

By defining a common strategic horizon the thinking of all “key stakeholders” can be transformed from adversarial thinking into parallel thinking towards a number of defined targets for the upcoming 5 Charter process years.



Visitors buying cycle



Marketing tasks



IMPRINT

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Do you want to take a closer look? Watch our family at their walk on the wild side. Holiday film clip at project website:

> www.parksandbenefits.net

Further information on certification:

> www.european-charter.org

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