

# Science for Environment Policy

## Private land conservation in Poland lacks landowner support

**Conservation on private land in Poland** is supported by less than half of landowners, a new study suggests. The authors conclude that both conservation agencies and landowners could benefit from voluntary conservation schemes, financial incentives and more participatory decision-making processes, while civic organisations could play a vital coordinating role.

**Including private land in protected sites** can help to connect up large conservation areas. However, in Poland, the predominant approach to conservation on private land is regulatory conservation — involuntary conservation that subjects landowners to certain rules and regulations. Until the country's accession to the EU in 2004, its protected areas included very little private land, but the establishment of [Natura 2000](#) means the proportion is expected to increase.

Researchers analysed private landowners' attitudes towards inclusion of private land in protected areas in Poland, based on case studies representative of three different types of protected area: national parks, landscape parks and Natura 2000 sites. Sites were only considered if they were at least 15 000 hectares and a minimum of 15% privately owned for national parks, or 50% (agricultural and private land) for landscape parks and Natura 2000 sites. The final selections were Biebrzanski National Park, Skierbieszowski Landscape Park and the Dolina Gornej Wisly Natura 2000 site. Land was used primarily for farming at the national and landscape parks, and for housing at the Natura 2000 site.

Attitudes towards conservation were assessed by questionnaire in face-to-face interviews. In total, 318 interviews were conducted at randomly selected addresses within the protected areas. Around two thirds of landowners agreed that protected areas enhanced and conserved the natural resources around them. However, despite approximately half gaining a 'high' score for conservation ethic — based on a series of eight questions — 55% did not support the inclusion of private land in protected areas. This proportion was even higher (64%) for the national park site, which had the strictest regulations. Additionally, landowners with higher education were more likely to support conservation on private land. Those who disagreed with the inclusion of private land argued that they should be able to maintain sole decision-making power over their own land.

The vast majority (82%) of landowners did not want to sell their land to protected area management agencies, and 73% said agencies could be more proactive in engaging them in conservation. 92% sought financial incentives for taking part in conservation and 89% wanted more participatory decision-making processes. However, a key finding was that most respondents prioritised the latter over the former.

On the whole, landowners had little contact with management agencies and were often unaware of other local organisations and institutions involved in conservation. In the Natura 2000 site, a third of respondents did not even realise they were in a protected area.

The researchers conclude that including private land in protected areas makes landowners more defensive of their rights and "weary" of conservation management agencies. Their results also show that while financial incentives are important, they are not the only source of conflict in private land conservation. The researchers suggest that more participatory policy processes involving local landowners are needed to support the current regulatory conservation on private land, and also to encourage more voluntary conservation approaches in countries like Poland, where they are rarely used. These processes should be accompanied by new financial incentives, in addition to the EU's [Agri-Environment Scheme](#).

They also highlight the need for civic sector organisations to take a more prominent role in conservation on private land, by helping to push for increased accountability and transparency of public sector organisations involved in conservation management, and providing alternative channels of communication for residents.



**19 November 2015**  
**Issue 436**

**Subscribe to free**  
**weekly News Alert**

**Source:** Kamal, S., Kocór, M. & Grodzińska-Jurczak, M. (2015). Conservation opportunity in biodiversity conservation on regulated private lands: Factors influencing landowners' attitude. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 54, 287–296. DOI: 10.1016/j.envsci.2015.07.023

**Contact:**  
[shristikamal@gmail.com](mailto:shristikamal@gmail.com);  
[marcin.kocor@uj.edu.pl](mailto:marcin.kocor@uj.edu.pl);  
[grodzinska-jurczak@uj.edu.pl](mailto:grodzinska-jurczak@uj.edu.pl)

**Read more about:**  
[Biodiversity](#), [Land use](#)

The contents and views included in *Science for Environment Policy* are based on independent, peer-reviewed research and do not necessarily reflect the position of the European Commission.

To cite this article/service: "[Science for Environment Policy](#)": European Commission DG Environment News Alert Service, edited by SCU, The University of the West of England, Bristol.