

GSN Best Practice Competition 2008



Application form

Applicant

Organisation, country	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, Sweden
Name, surname	Annmari Lindquist and Suzanne Kolare
Headline of best practice initiative	Dialogue for nature conservation

Description of best practice initiative

<p>Describe the basis of your best practice initiative (why, what, when, where; budget in EUR).</p> <p>Sooner or later, nature conservation agencies in all countries run into problems when trying to fulfill their task to conserve nature and get public acceptance for their work. Landowners, farmers, hunters, NGO:s, neighbours and other stakeholders have their ideas of how to make best use of nature and the environment -- and all ideas are not in line with the Rio-declaration for preservation and sustainable use.</p> <p>It is vital to have good relations with stakeholders when we try to fulfil the goals for the Natura 2000-network, create national parks or manage wildlife in a sustainable way. The communications skills of government officers on all levels - national, regional and local - are essential in order to have good relations and deal with eventual conflicts.</p> <p>Most of the officers have studied biology or have other nature science examens, but environmental communication is not a subject in those courses. Therefore the Swedish Environmental Protections Agency (Swedish EPA) has created a skills development program called Dialogue for nature conservation. The subtitle outlines the task "Skills development in dialogue, local participation and management, and conflict management within nature conservation and the management of natural resources".</p> <p>The program is intended for Swedish EPA and the 21 county administrative boards and we estimate that around 600 people work with these issues on our authorities. The first two years we plan to arrange courses for some 300 people. There is a great interest from other agencies that also deal with nature, i.e. agencies for fishery, culture, farming, forestry.</p> <p>In order to create a pedagogical program we engaged the leading specialists in Sweden in environmental communication - Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development, Unit for Environmental Communication. Their teachers also run the courses.</p> <p>There are 8 different courses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-- a basic course,-- a course for directors,-- advanced courses in management and site protection, local development and nature conservation, wildlife management, large carnivore issues.-- advanced courses in communication: co-operation and learning, conflict management. <p>The courses are largely based on the experiences of the participants.</p> <p>The courses run between 2 and 5 days. The cost is 128 000 Euro for one year.</p>
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<p>What was the main objective of the initiative and what were the results obtained (please quantify)?</p> <p>The main objective is to ensure good communication in nature conservation and wildlife management, and to increase local participation by giving the officers theoretical background and practical tools for conducting dialogue, creating democratic processes and acquiring basic knowledge about conflict management.</p>
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<p>What type of media did you use (TV, radio, print, electronic)? Why this choice of media?</p>

This is a personal encounter project. We informed about the program on our website and on meetings and seminars with regional authorities. The interest for the courses has increased through "the grapevine" - after the first basic course the number of applicants rose sharply.

Who was the target group?

The primary target group for the courses are government employees on national and regional level. The real target groups for the initiative are stakeholders, i.e. everyone that we communicate with, for example people in other authorities, landowners, farmers and other stakeholders, NGO:s.

What were the main messages?

Modern nature conservation concerns both people and nature. Dialogue is a prerequisite for nature conservation agencies to succeed in conservation and sustainable use of nature. Local participation is vital in regional landscape planning and the ecosystem approach, so many stakeholders are involved and there is no other way to success.

Who were the partners? Did you involve other institutions/ministries/agencies/NGOs?

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development, Unit for Environmental Communication

Who financed the activities, amount of finances?

Swedish EPA through our budget for biological diversity finance the courses. The cost is estimated to 128 000 Euro per year in 2008 and 2009. The Swedish EPA and County Administrative Boards finance costs for travel, food and lodging for the participants.

Did you experience any specific difficulties during the action that could be learned from?

There is a linguistic issue in creating courses in environmental communication for nature scientists. They are not trained in the vocabulary of social science, so we were afraid that the biologists would not be interested in the courses if we used too many communication terms. We took great care in editing the program in order to get acceptance and still not lose the message.

We discussed a lot about how long the courses should be, what would be most cost-effective. We did not want to compete with university classes on environmental communication, and we did want the courses to be based on the personal experience of the participants. Therefore we decided on short courses with homework and possibilities to get support from the teachers after the courses.

Did you receive any feedback after your activities? Did you carry out an evaluation of the results and if yes, what was

the outcome?

We will conduct an evaluation at the end of the two year program, but of course we gather opinions from the participants on each course. We have so far (May 2008) run two basic courses and the demand for more basic courses has forced us to change the plans and we will increase the number of basic courses in the autumn.

Is any follow-up or duplication of this experience foreseen?

The program will be evaluated in 2010 and then we decide how to continue.

Why do you consider that your proposal should be selected as the best practice initiative of the year?

The program is not a campaign but a way for us to improve the acceptance for modern nature conservation and wildlife management.

The program broadens the concept of information to active environmental communication and more democratic processes that will give room for local participation in modern nature conservation and wildlife management. It will increase the possibilities to work with and gain support for nature conservation and wildlife management.

Please feel free to attach any printed material, photos etc.

Send your application to EECN_secretariat@cowi.com by 1 June 2008