



European
Commission

Nature and Biodiversity Newsletter

Number 33 | January 2013



NATURA 2000

ISSN 1026-6151

Managing sites in the Natura 2000 Network



Environment

CONTENTS

3-5

Outcome of the first Boreal
Natura 2000 Seminar

6-7

The Natura 2000 Viewer

8-9

Natura 2000 Barometer –
update June 2012

10-11

New Natura 2000 Sector
Guides

12-13

The 11th CBD Conference of
Parties

14-16

News Round-up



The Environment Commissioner, Janez Potočnik, celebrating 20 years of the Habitats Directive at the Genk Conference in October 2012 with two of the 'founding fathers' of the Directive – Stanley Johnson (left of the Commissioner) and Hemmo Muntingh (to the right of him).

Editorial

2012 was, in many ways, an interesting year for biodiversity. As we celebrated 20 years of the Habitats Directive and the EU LIFE Fund, we were able to take a moment to reflect on the tremendous progress that has been made over the last two decades towards safeguarding Europe's biodiversity. I very much doubt that 20 years ago, people imagined that the European Union would one day be home to the largest coordinated international network of protected areas in the world. I doubt that many foresaw the EU expanding from 12 to 27 countries either. With Croatia joining next year, the EU's biological and cultural diversity will be further enriched to the benefit of us all.

This year of reflection has also brought into sharp focus the many challenges that lie ahead. We should not underestimate the sizeable effort still required to ensure that our network is coherent and sufficiently well managed to deliver its potential. To help in this process, the Commission has initiated, in partnership with Member States and key stakeholders, a new set of seminars for each of the Biogeographical Regions of the EU. The aim is to promote more coordinated actions for the management of the Natura 2000 network. After all, Natura 2000 is as much a network of people as it is a network of sites, and everyone involved – from farmers and foresters to tourists and site administrators – has an important role to play.

The French writer Guy de Maupassant once said "Travel, like dreams, is a door that opens from the real world into a world that is yet to be discovered." I don't know exactly where this journey will lead us, and I don't know if we will reach our destination by 2020, but I do know that every step we take in the right direction will make a difference to the lives of many, and I do know that it is a journey worth taking. I hope, in fact I know, that nature can continue to count on your support also in the coming years.

Janez Potočnik
European Commissioner for Environment





Exchanging practical experiences on the management of certain forest habitat types during the Boreal Natura 2000 Seminar in May 2012.

Outcome of the first Boreal Natura 2000 Seminar

An overview was given in the last issue of the Commission's new initiative on the

The first Boreal Natura 2000 seminar led to a series of recommendations for improving the conservation of 18 key habitats in the Boreal Region

management of the Natura 2000 Network – called the new biogeographical process.

The objective of this new process is to encourage an active exchange of experiences and best practices, at a biogeographical level, amongst different authorities, practitioners, stakeholders and experts on the conservation of certain key habitat types and species protected within Natura

2000. This should in turn help Member States to manage Natura 2000 as a coherent ecological network.

So far three seminar cycles have been initiated for the Boreal, Atlantic and Alpine Regions (see last issue). The results of the first Seminar for the Boreal Region are now available, and are briefly summarised below.

The Boreal Process

The Boreal Process was led by Finland, with the support of the other Member States within the region (Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) as well as the European Commission, the EEA and the European Topic Centre for Biodiversity.

At the start, the five countries decided to focus on 18 habitat types for which the Boreal Region has a special

responsibility in terms of their distribution and conservation status. These include six types of grassland, five wetlands, five forests, one coastal and one freshwater habitat type.

Information was collected on each of these habitats as regards their conservation status, pressures and threats, management measures etc. within the region, in order to identify the most important conservation issues for each habitat group (see table).

This laid the groundwork for the first pilot Natura 2000 Seminar in which Member States jointly agreed on a series of tangible actions that could be implemented over the coming years to improve the conservation status of these main habitat groups within the Boreal Region.

The Boreal Seminar

The Boreal Seminar itself was held in Hämeenlinna, Finland from 28 to 30 May 2012. It brought together over 80 key experts and authorities from all five Member States.

Over the two days, the key conservation issues identified for the four main habitat groups were discussed in detail. The purpose was to identify the main problems and possible solutions, and agree on a series of tangible actions that could be undertaken within a set timetable.

In addition, each group was asked to come up with recommendations on the following cross cutting issues affecting all habitat types:

- setting objectives for site and species management;
- Article 17 calibration and determining Favourable Conservation Status;
- management planning process;
- stakeholders – communication and participation.

The results of the seminar have been recorded in a series of tables – one for each of the key conservation issues per main habitat group – which are available in the final Seminar Report. Each table provides a summary of the recommendations, tangible



© i-Stockphoto

Mimicking natural disturbances can be an important management tool for certain boreal forest habitat types. This was one of the key conservation issues discussed during the Boreal Seminar.

actions and proposed first steps that were agreed upon at the seminar (see examples on page 5).

Roadmap for the future

A follow-up meeting to the Boreal Seminar took place in Tallinn (Estonia) on 13 November. At this meeting progress on all agreed actions and recommendations was discussed further. Some of the activities identified at the seminar have already been

completed, some are now on-going and others are in preparation for 2013.

This shows that the cooperation amongst the Member States involved is working well and it can be expected that by 2013 all actions agreed will have been engaged.

A key element is the establishment of a number of active networking initiatives on particular conservation issues linked to the selected

habitat types. This networking is expected to progressively develop over the coming years.

The communication platform that is currently being established for the new biogeographical process will represent an important tool for facilitating further exchanges and networking ideas.

For more information go to: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/seminars_en.htm

Table: Key conservation issues discussed per main habitat group.

Habitat Group	Discussion Issues
Grasslands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) • Land abandonment and fragmentation • Unsuitable management • Alternative management
Forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management and restoration • Mimicking natural disturbances • Non-intervention management: how much management can be accepted, sustainable use ... • Connectivity issues outside Natura 2000
Wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modification of hydrological functions of mires • Lack of knowledge about ecological processes in minerotrophic mires • Restoration methodologies
Freshwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catchment approach • Ecological functionality e.g. hydropower etc. • Cross-sectoral cooperation (e.g. synergies with Water Framework Directive) • Complexity of the habitat

Many valuable grasslands in N2000 are currently ineligible for CAP payments because they harbour too many trees, rocks or other 'unproductive' landscape features.



© Shutterstock

Examples of Tangible actions and proposed first steps.

Grasslands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message to the Commission outlining problems and solutions regarding the definition and eligibility of permanent grasslands. • Seminar on local objectives and management planning process. • Establish a working group to address the issues of abandonment and fragmentation. • Develop and implement a 'boreal ecological network' in which key areas for restoration, corridors, stepping stones and other important features and actions are identified. • Establish a working group to address the potential for alternative grassland management.
Forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration grand tour. • The development of generic and specific forest restoration and management guidelines. • Develop a project proposal (e.g. LIFE+) for implementing the desired restoration and proper conservational 'disturbance' management in selected Natura 2000 sites in order to achieve favourable conservation status of habitats and species. • Develop a project proposal (e.g. LIFE+) for applying naturally large-scale disturbance factors at a smaller scale through a landscape level planning approach that takes into account temporal and spatial aspects.
Wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a project proposal (e.g. LIFE+) for the large-scale restoration of the natural hydrology of mire complexes. • Establish a working group under the auspices of the networking framework to address the issues of mire management and fragmentation. • Workshop on restoration methodologies.
Freshwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a project proposal (e.g. LIFE+) for implementing the catchment based approach in selected Annex 1 habitats. • The establishment of a working group under the auspices of the networking framework to address the impact of hydroelectric power generation on the ecological functionality and restoration of wetlands. • The development of generic and specific guidelines for the design, location and management of new hydroelectric power installations and the mitigation of the impacts of existing installations.
Communication Platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build prototype platform, operationalise and promote use within the biogeographic region.



Few rivers in the Boreal Region remain entirely free-flowing.



Kakerdaja Bog on a misty morning, Estonia.



The Natura 2000 Viewer provides immediate online access to all sites in the Natura 2000 Network.

The Natura 2000 Viewer

Find out about Europe's Natura 2000 sites on the new enhanced Natura 2000 Viewer: <http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/#>

Developed a few years ago by the European Environment Agency (EEA), the Natura 2000 Viewer has become an

invaluable internet tool for anyone interested in finding out about Europe's Natura 2000 sites. It allows the user to locate and explore any one of the ca. 26 400 sites included in the EU network at a press of the button.

Search facilities

The Viewer offers a range of different search options. It can for instance:

1. *Identify all the Natura 2000 sites that are present in a particular location:* It suffices to type in the name of the location and the map will automatically zoom into that area and highlight all Natura 2000 sites situated in its vicinity.
2. *Locate a specific Natura 2000 site:* The Viewer will go directly to a site on the map if one already has its name or code number.
3. *Find sites for particular species or habitat types:* Type in the Latin name of the species or select a habitat type from the list and the Viewer will reveal all the sites that have been designated for that species or habitat across the EU-27.

One can then zoom into a particular area (e.g. a country or region) to find out more about the individual sites of interest.

Sites designated under the Birds Directive (Special Protection Areas) are displayed in red. Those under the Habitats Directive (Sites of Community Interest) are in blue. They can be viewed independently or together (i.e. all Natura 2000 sites).

The background can also be changed. This means that the different sites can be laid out on a street map, a satellite map (with or without labels), a Corine land cover map or a map of the Biogeographical regions, or any combination of the above, at different levels of transparency.



With the Viewer one can locate all sites within the vicinity of a particular area or region anywhere in the EU.

Once a particular site has been selected, it can be explored further using Google Earth or by browsing through photos of the area on Panoramio.

The site's Standard Data Form is also available for downloading or reading online. This is the official document accompanying each site under the Natura 2000 Network. As such it provides valuable information about the EU protected species and habitats present, as well as their conservation status.

The Viewer should be particularly useful for:

- Land owners, users and other stakeholders, such as tourism providers, who would like to know about Natura 2000 sites in their area;
- Developers who are planning new development projects that might affect one or more Natura 2000 sites;
- Government authorities, land use planners and policy makers;
- Researchers and scientists;
- Non-governmental organisations and nature practitioners.

It should also be of interest to anyone who is curious about Natura 2000 and who might want to search for a site near them or whilst travelling. Additionally it can be used by teachers and school children who are interested in finding out more about the EU's natural heritage and how Europe's biodiversity is being protected

through the Natura 2000 Network.

To make it even more accessible, the Viewer is also now available as an application which can be downloaded onto a smart phone or tablet.

Recent improvements

During the course of 2012 the Viewer has undergone a further series of improvements, particularly as regards its coverage (all 27 EU Member States are now covered) and the accuracy of the site boundaries (these are now accurate up to five metres for most Member States).

All ca. 26 400 sites are included in the Viewer. The information provided in the Standard Data forms is also generally complete, except for those sites that harbour sensitive species and for which it would be inappropriate to reveal their location in case it might put them at risk (for example through illegal collection of rare plants, reptiles, etc.).

Two further search facilities have been added during the course of the year. The first enables the user to view sites that have been protected according to national or regional legislation, such as

National Parks, nature reserves, biosphere reserves, etc.

The second offers the possibility to locate particular LIFE Nature projects and to find out more about them via the LIFE project database.

Thanks to the most recent update in December 2012, it is possible to display the sites against a background of one or several Corine land cover categories (agricultural areas, forests, wetlands, etc.) and to show the relative coverage of the Natura 2000 network in different Member States (note however that this is not a measure of the progress of the Natura 2000 network).

In addition, the search functions for species and habitats have been improved, allowing one to view the sites identified for a species or habitat together with its natural distribution and actual range according to Art 17 reporting.

Further exciting developments are scheduled for 2013. These include the possibility to display the boundaries and areas of individual land sections that have been purchased, over the last 20 years, under the LIFE-Nature Programme. It is expected that the publication of this information will bring additional security as to the long-term protection of the sites purchased with EU funding.

It is also foreseen to give access to historical versions of the Natura 2000 area information, thereby making it possible to track changes to the Natura 2000 network over time (eg changes to site boundaries, addition of new sites etc.).

And finally, it is worth noting that the information about sites on the Natura 2000 Viewer is currently being updated once a year, taking into account the most recent databases submitted by the Member States until end of September of any given year. The next update is foreseen in spring 2013.

The Viewer is available on: <http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/#>

The Viewer can be a useful tool for schools and families wishing to explore Europe's areas of protected sites.



natura 2000 barometer

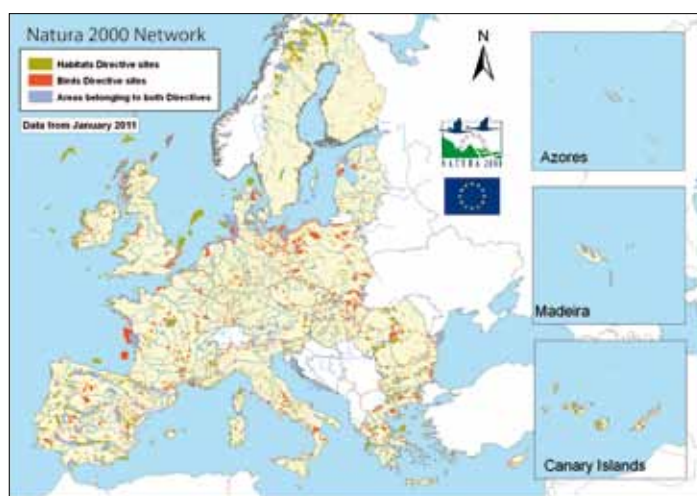
Member States	NATURA 2000 SITES (SPAS + SCIS)			TERRESTRIAL				
	Total N° Natura sites	Total area in Natura (km ²)	% land area covered by Natura	Total area SCI (km ²)	N° SCIs	Total area SPA (km ²)	N° SPAs	
BELGIË/BELGIQUE	458	5 153.81	12.74%	3 067.27	278	2 969.08	232	
BULGARIA	336	39 056.31	34.34%	33 259.89	230	25 097.41	118	
ČESKÁ REPUBLIKA	1 116	11 061.62	14.03%	7 856.03	1 075	7 034.48	41	
DANMARK	350	22 646.81	8.94%	3 432.50	234	2 856.15	111	
DEUTSCHLAND	5 266	80 749.82	15.43%	33 402.66	4 605	40 211.44	737	
EESTI	568	14 832.28	17.82%	7 650.42	536	6 135.94	65	
ÉIRE/IRELAND	587	16 095.68	13.17%	7 186.12	419	4 334.09	157	
ELLÁDA	419	42 947.05	27.30%	21 623.45	240	27 854.38	201	
ESPAÑA	1 802	147 765.34	27.24%	116 130.43	1 436	100 944.41	590	
FRANCE	1 753	110 585.30	12.56%	46 664.22	1 358	43 449.61	376	
ITALIA	2 565	63 127.19	19.17%	43 359.62	2 240	40 740.34	601	
KÝPROS*	61	1 759.75	28.37%	750.85	39	1 481.70	29	
LATVIJA	332	11 828.42	11.53%	7 420.76	327	6 609.55	97	
LIETUVA	488	8 564.95	12.07%	6 119.84	402	5 484.42	85	
LUXEMBOURG	60	471.37	18.15%	413.62	48	139.07	12	
MAGYARORSZÁG	525	19 949.49	21.44%	14 443.56	479	13 745.73	56	
MALTA	39	233.72	13.37%	41.56	30	15.89	12	
NEDERLAND	203	17 402.80	13.82%	3 239.65	140	4 957.58	78	
ÖSTERREICH	219	12 548.23	14.96%	8 992.08	170	10 110.48	98	
POLSKA	961	68 291.29	19.52%	33 592.26	822	48 494.76	143	
PORTUGAL	147	21 004.08	20.92%	15 600.28	91	9 346.64	53	
ROMÂNIA	531	55 727.95	22.66%	39 979.08	382	35 482.91	148	
SLOVENIJA	286	7 203.44	35.52%	6 359.84	259	4 653.15	27	
SLOVENSKO	514	14 446.26	29.58%	5 838.24	473	13 110.59	41	
SUOMI	1 833	55 677.08	14.42%	48 471.89	1 681	24 571.35	465	
SVERIGE	4 078	66 330.83	13.77%	56 654.14	3 954	25 224.93	515	
UNITED KINGDOM	909	70 247.81	8.55%	13 102.77	625	16 039.66	267	
EU27	26 406	985 708.70	17.90%	584 653.02	22 573	521 095.75	5 355	

* The area and % of territory corresponds to the area of Cyprus where the Community acquis applies at present, according to protocol 10 of the Accession Treaty of Cyprus.

The **Natura Barometer** is managed by DG ENV with the technical assistance of the European Environment Agency and is based on information officially transmitted by Member States. Many sites have been designated according to both Nature Directives, either in their entirety or partially. The figures relating to the number of Natura 2000 sites (i.e. SPAs + SCIs) and their area coverage have been obtained by GIS analysis in order to eliminate possible overlaps between Birds Directive sites and Habitats Directive sites.

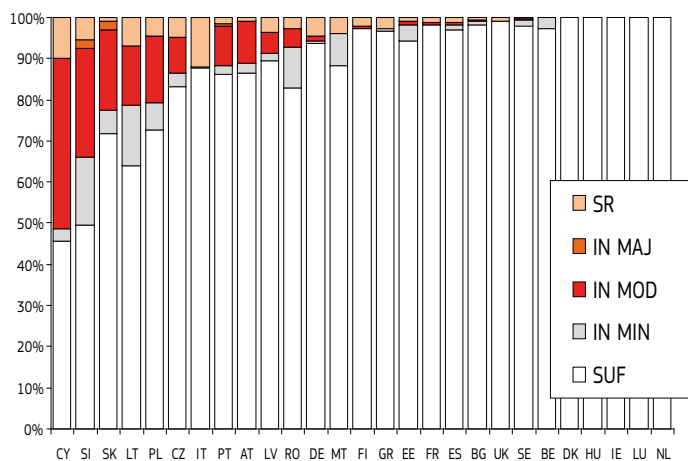
The methodology used for these calculations has recently been refined, which explains why many of the figures are slightly different from the previous Barometer update.

However, most differences are due to genuine increases of the Natura 2000 Network. Since the last issue, there have been major increases in the Natura 2000 area for Malta, Latvia, the United Kingdom (mostly marine) and Romania (mostly terrestrial). Bulgaria, Ireland and Slovakia have extended their SPA network, but mostly on sites that were already SCIs.



update June 2012

		MARINE						Member States
Total area Natura 2000 (km ²)	Total N° Natura sites on land	Total area SCI (km ²)	N° SCIs	Total area SPA (km ²)	N° SPAs	Total area Marine Natura 2000 (km ²)	Total N° Marine Natura sites	
3 890.52	453	1 123.60	3	311.99	4	1 262.89	7	BELGIUM
38 083.57	335	582.56	13	507.86	11	925.81	23	BULGARIA
11 061.62	1 116	0	0	0	0	0	0	CZECH REPUBLIC
3 854.66	296	16 235.05	85	11 931.23	51	18 789.14	128	DENMARK
55 082.06	5 229	21 012.84	61	19 721.77	26	25 667.11	84	GERMANY
8 058.73	558	3 899.32	43	6 501.06	26	6 773.18	50	ESTONIA
9 258.66	542	6 347.15	126	1 534.69	86	6 828.69	211	IRELAND
36 022.22	403	6 432.52	93	1 662.70	42	6 898.69	125	GREECE
137 510.17	1 719	10 027.74	181	2 598.30	70	10 193.13	214	SPAIN
68 955.13	1 658	27 737.05	132	35 219.75	75	41 624.69	207	FRANCE
57 755.74	2 463	4 277.84	245	3 012.80	67	5 305.00	278	ITALY
1 627.37	59	132.27	7	111.21	5	132.34	9	CYPRUS*
7 446.79	325	3 792.72	10	2 398.75	7	4 379.21	11	LATVIA
7 879.07	484	538.11	7	424.00	6	685.89	13	LITHUANIA
471.37	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	LUXEMBOURG
19 949.49	525	0	0	0	0	0	0	HUNGARY
42.24	32	190.69	10	0.24	4	190.87	13	MALTA
5 739.73	196	11 662.03	11	5 602.40	7	11 662.14	14	THE NETHERLANDS
12 548.23	219	0	0	0	0	0	0	AUSTRIA
61 043.08	956	4 337.91	8	7 236.68	9	7 248.19	16	POLAND
19 246.60	136	1 244.89	39	1 149.98	21	1 756.19	58	PORTUGAL
54 009.64	524	1 526.62	8	1 366.28	1	1 706.84	9	ROMANIA
7 200.48	286	0.11	7	2.85	1	2.95	8	SLOVENIA
14 446.26	514	0	0	0	0	0	0	SLOVAKIA
48 754.14	1 798	6 572.62	139	6 509.88	92	6 922.35	166	FINLAND
57 123.72	3 994	9 124.79	403	4 635.74	128	9 202.85	441	SWEDEN
20 933.68	837	42 350.04	133	11 443.11	124	49 306.85	256	UNITED KINGDOM
767 994.98	25 717	179 148.47	1 764	123 883.29	863	217 464.46	2 341	EU27



Note that the graph only covers the terrestrial part of the SCI network, i.e. marine species and habitat types are not taken into account. (Situation: December 2012)

Sufficiency of the European Natura 2000 Network

For Sites of Community Interest under the Habitats Directive (SCIs), the Commission, with assistance from the ETC-BD, evaluates the completeness of the network by individually assessing, for any relevant species and habitat type, whether its occurrence is sufficiently well covered by the existing sites. According to the results of this assessment, which are updated once a year, the level of completeness of Natura 2000 can be expressed as the percentage of species' and habitats' assessments per member state indicating that the network is complete. The graph indicates the result of this evaluation, for the terrestrial part of Natura 2000:

- **SR** (scientific reserve): additional research needed to identify the best sites;
- **IN MAJ** (major insufficiency): none of the sites where that species/habitat type occurs have been proposed so far;
- **IN MOD** (moderate insufficiency): additional sites still need to be proposed or existing sites be extended for that species/habitat type;
- **IN MIN** (minor insufficiency): sufficiency could be achieved by adding the species/habitat type as a qualifying feature to existing sites;
- **SUF** (sufficient): the network is sufficient for that species/habitat type.



The Otter, Lutra lutra, inhabits many of Europe's major lowland rivers. However its conservation status remains unfavourable due to the loss and fragmentation of its habitat, and water pollution.

New Natura 2000 sector guides



Oystercatcher, Haematopus ostralegus, often found in large numbers on coastal mudflats.

Last autumn, the Commission published two new Natura 2000 sector guides – this time focusing on **aquaculture** and **inland waterway transport**.

Both sectors are heavily dependent on the natural environment for their activities. This has led to situations where individual plans and projects have come into conflict with competing land uses or broader societal interests, including nature conservation.

The two new documents provide guidance on how best to ensure that such developments are compatible with the provisions of EU nature legislation. As with the previous guides on wind energy, ports and non-energy mineral extraction, they aim to increase the sectors understanding of the permit procedure under Article 6 of the Habitats

Directive in particular and improve the overall quality of the appropriate assessments.

Experience has shown that delays in the approval process are often caused by the fact that the necessary procedures have not been followed correctly or that the assessment itself is poorly done. The guides offer developers and authorities a detailed step-by-step guide to the provisions of Article 6.3 and 6.4 as they relate to their sector of activity.

In each case they outline the types of impacts to look out for and explain certain key concepts, such as setting Natura 2000 conservation objectives and analysing site integrity, in more detail. The documents are not intended to be prescriptive, but rather offer useful advice and ideas based on good practice experiences from across the EU.

Stakeholder collaboration

An ad hoc working group was set up to assist with the preparation of each guidance document.

Co-chaired by the relevant Commission services, the group brought together industry representatives, scientific experts, national authorities, Commission officials and NGOs to discuss their concerns over the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives.

This provided an opportunity to examine each others' points of view on specific issues and exchange experiences, good practices and lessons learnt from earlier plans and projects in and around Natura 2000. It also helped to ensure that the final document was 'fit for purpose' and addressed the main issues raised by each sector.

Key messages

Despite the specificities of each sector, certain common issues and recommendations have come out of the guidance exercise. They include the following:

- **Strategic integrated planning** makes life easier for all concerned. Planning new developments in a strategic manner over a broad geographical area not only leads to a more holistic, transparent and stable development framework for the industry, but is also one of the most effective means of minimising potential conflicts with Natura 2000 sites early on in the planning process.
- Ensuring there is a **sufficiently robust information base** for the appropriate assessment is of paramount importance. Experience has shown, time and again, that many of the delays or problems encountered during the permit approval process are caused by the fact that the information gathered for the appropriate assessment is incomplete and that the necessary steps have not been followed. As a result, the whole process has to be put on hold whilst the missing information is gathered.
- **Early dialogue and consultation is vital:** good

research and consultation right from the start, before work has begun on the development proposal, helps developers avoid unnecessary time and expense later on. Consulting with relevant authorities and other stakeholders already at the initial design stage not only helps minimise the impacts on, or avoid altogether, particularly sensitive Natura 2000 sites but also leads to a smoother,

and often faster, decision-making process.

- **Setting clear and precise conservation objectives for Natura 2000 sites** will greatly facilitate the developer's task of assessing, and wherever possible, minimising the potential implications of their plan or project on that site.

The guidance documents are available on http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/guidance_en.htm#inland



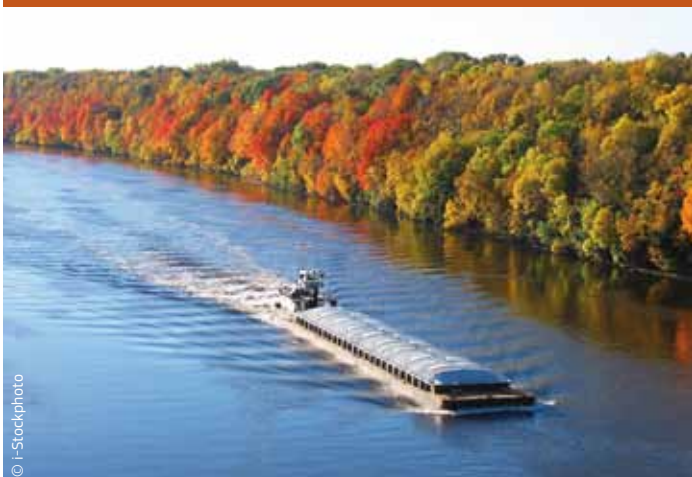
Inland waterway transport and Natura 2000

Inland waterway transport plays an increasingly important role in the transportation of goods within the EU. Each year, over 500 million tons of cargo is transported along Europe's extensive network of navigable rivers and canals, taking a significant load off some of our busiest and most congested roads.

Recognising the potential of inland waterways to alleviate traffic congestion and reduce CO₂ emissions, the European Commission has, in its new White Paper on Transport published last year, called for a 30% shift in all road movements over 300 km to rail and water by 2030.

It will be important to ensure that this is done in a sustainable and integrated way. Europe's rivers are a vital multifunctional resource for a wide range of different interest groups. They also provide many valuable ecosystem services, such as clean water and flood protection and play a key role in the protection of rare and threatened species and habitats under the Birds and Habitats Directives.

Significant riverine areas have been included in the Natura 2000 network as a result. In the case of the Danube and the Elbe rivers, for instance, they make up around 40% and 60% of their entire lengths respectively.



© i-Stockphoto

Aquaculture and Natura 2000

In Ireland, an integrated approach towards aquaculture developments in Natura 2000 sites is being trialled in a number of Natura 2000 sites, such as Castlemaine Harbour. The aim is to facilitate the Article 6.3 permitting procedures for planned aquaculture activities whilst ensuring full compliance with the conservation objectives of the site.

At every site, detailed scientific surveys are being undertaken to set clear and precise conservation objectives. At the same time Bord Iascaigh Mhara (the State agency responsible for aquaculture industries in Ireland) prepares a 'fisheries natura plan' for the site in consultation with local fishermen in which it describes both on-going and planned aquaculture activities for the next ca. five years, in terms of their location, harvest volume and operators etc...

An appropriate assessment is subsequently made of the fisheries natura plan in light of the site's detailed conservation objectives. The advantages of this approach are multiple. It means only one single assessment needs to be undertaken for multiple projects. It also means that the potential cumulative effects are taken properly into account to ensure thresholds of significance are not exceeded. This in turn offers the sector a stable framework for licensing operations where the conditions and restrictions are known in advance and can be properly monitored, enforced and, if need be, adjusted in light of the conservation monitoring results.



© Paul Prescott/shutterstock.com



Exploring the coastal and marine ecosystems of Andhra Pradesh at the COP 11 conference in Hyderabad, India.

The 11th CBD Conference of Parties



The golden lion tamarin, a Brazilian tropical forest species under serious threat.

Last October, the Convention on Biological Diversity held its eleventh meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP 11) in Hyderabad, India. A total of 33 decisions were adopted on a range of strategic, substantive, financial and budgetary issues.

Key decisions were taken on:

- the review of the Strategy for Resource Mobilisation, including on resource mobilisation targets;
- marine-biodiversity issues;
- the introduction of relevant biodiversity safeguards into REDD+ (the international mechanism on Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation);
- the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of

forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

Together, these decisions go some way towards turning the landmark agreements adopted at CBD COP 10 two years ago into operational actions.

Mobilising resources

The last COP meeting in Nagoya had highlighted the need to substantially increase financial, human and technical resources globally from all possible sources, including innovative financial mechanisms for biodiversity, and for this to be balanced with the effective implementation of the Strategic Plan by all Parties. Much of the discussion at COP 11 focused on this central issue.

In Hyderabad, the European Union and its Member States

played an active role in securing a decision on the subject. It includes confirmation by the EU, its member countries and other CBD Parties to substantially increase total biodiversity-related funding, from a variety of sources, against a baseline that reflects average annual biodiversity funding between 2006 and 2010.

Importantly, Parties also agreed to use a preliminary reporting framework as a flexible and preliminary framework to report on and monitor the resources mobilised for biodiversity at a national and global level.

A series of preliminary targets were agreed upon. These are to be reviewed at the next Conference of Parties (see box).



Targets adopted at COP11 for resource mobilisation

- Double total biodiversity-related international financial resource flows to developing countries by 2015 and at least maintain this level until 2020, including through a country-driven prioritisation of biodiversity in development plans in recipient countries;
- endeavour for 100% but achieve at least 75% of Parties having included biodiversity in their national priorities or development plans by 2015;
- endeavour for 100%, but achieve at least 75% of Parties provided with adequate financial resources having reported domestic biodiversity expenditures and funding needs, gaps and priorities by 2015; and
- endeavour for 100%, but achieve at least 75% of Parties, provided with adequate financial resources, having prepared national financial plans for biodiversity by 2015, and 30% of those Parties having assessed biodiversity values.

Tropical rainforest, Costa Rica.

Progress on marine biodiversity

Over the years, the CBD and partner organisations – in particular regional sea conventions (RSCs) – have completed a substantial amount of scientific work at a regional level on describing ‘ecologically and biologically significant marine areas’ (EBSAs). The results from a first series of regional workshops were presented in Hyderabad.

Recognising the value of this work, the Conference of Parties agreed to fully develop a dedicated repository for EBSAs in order to make this data publicly available to all that are interested. It is hoped that the

repository will encourage further MPAs to be designated across the world in order to meet the target set at the preceding COP meeting which called for 10% of the earth’s seas to be covered by MPAs or other area-based conservation measures by 2020.

Some of the summary regional reports describing areas that meet the scientific EBSA criteria have already been used as a key information base for the establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs) under the legally competent bodies such as RSCs.

Revised voluntary guidelines for taking biodiversity into account when carrying out Environmental Impact

Assessments (EIAs) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) in marine and coastal areas were also presented at the Conference (see document UNEP/CBD/COP/11/23).

Biodiversity and REDD+

With regard to biodiversity and climate change, the Conference of Parties made progress on integrating biodiversity safeguards into the REDD+ scheme which is being developed under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. This should help ensure more attention is paid to the preservation of biodiversity when undertaking REDD+ activities, and the contribution of those activities to the objectives of the CBD.

A key outcome was the approval of an annex which provides substantive advice on safeguards for biodiversity when undertaking REDD+ activities. This advice will help developing countries ensure that biodiversity is safeguarded and protected. Another crucial element consists in stressing the need for monitoring on how REDD+ activities contribute to achieving the objectives of

the Convention on Biological Diversity; and in this regard, the decision notes that the indicative list of indicators to assess progress towards the Strategic Plan’s goals could be useful for such assessment.

Next steps

South Korea will host COP12 in the second half of 2014, and Parties to the UN Biodiversity Convention will consider, amongst others, the potential adoption of a final resource mobilisation target, possible principles and safeguards for the use of innovative financial mechanisms, and the removal, reform or phase-out of any incentives and subsidies that are harmful to biodiversity.

The next COP meeting will also carry out a mid-term review of the progress made towards achieving the 20 headline targets for 2015 and 2020 set out in the CBD’s Strategic Plan for Biodiversity.

For further information on the COP 11 decisions go to: <http://www.cbd.int/cop11/>
A prototype of the EBSA repository can already be accessed under: <http://ebsa.cbd.int>.

A shoal of powder-blue surgeonfish swimming along the reef in the Maldives.



natura news

● NEWS ● PUBLICATIONS ● EVENTS

New Natura 2000 sites approved

In November 2012, the Commission announced the inclusion of a further 235 sites in the Natura 2000 Network, covering all biogeographical regions and extending the network by a further 25,000 km². Most of the new sites have been designated to complete the terrestrial part of the network in the 12 newest Member States. Romania, for instance, has added 109 new sites and enlarged several existing sites, in order to improve the protection of species-rich meadows and forest habitats and to safeguard the endemic fish fauna of the Danube River Basin.

Substantial marine areas have also been added to the network, particularly in the North Sea, Baltic and Mediterranean. The single most important addition concerns

Dogger Bank, a large shallow area in the middle of the North Sea famous for its extensive sandbanks and rich marine life. Germany and the Netherlands had already designated their share of this transboundary area but now the UK has added its share (covering 12,330 km²) making this the largest international marine Natura 2000 site in the EU.

For more information go to <https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/2da02f1d-9cf8-4ed6-8697-d0b8ff4cfd69>

Natura 2000 in the marine environment

Talking of marine issues, DG ENV has recently issued two new documents on this subject. The first is a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document designed to clarify the links between the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC) and the Habitats and Birds

Directives. The three Directives are clearly inter-related in that all are concerned with aspects of biodiversity conservation in the marine environment, including a requirement to achieve good status for the elements of biodiversity covered by each Directive. There are however also a number of important distinctions between them. The aim of the FAQ document is to clarify these interactions, synergies and differences, and identify potential areas for greater coordination.

The second document concerns the introduction of fisheries management measures in Natura 2000 sites. A Member State wishing to introduce regulatory measures on fishing in a particular Natura 2000 site must first apply to the Commission for permission under the Common Fisheries Policy. The new document, which has been drawn up by the Commission services (DG MARE and DG ENV) aims to facilitate the tasks of the Member State authorities when preparing such requests.

For more information go to http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/marine/index_en.htm

Stakeholder workshop on Forests and N2000

On 13 December, DG Environment and DG Agriculture co-organised a stakeholder workshop on forest management in Natura 2000. This was the first meeting of its kind in Brussels, bringing together stakeholders, public authorities and NGOs from different EU countries to discuss

key challenges and opportunities, and exchange practical experiences.

Forests make up a substantial part of the Natura 2000 network and, as such, play a major role in ensuring that protected forest species and habitat types reach a favourable conservation status within the EU. However, concerns have been raised over the practical application of conservation measures within forests.

In light of this, the Commission has launched a new dialogue between the different parties involved with a view to developing further guidance on the practical implementation of the EU Habitats and Birds Directives in relation to forests and other wooded land. The objective is to encourage greater communication and cooperation between the forest and conservation communities and explore, using good practice experiences, how forest and Natura 2000 objectives can effectively work together in practice.

Proposals for an updated EIA Directive

In October, the Commission unveiled its proposals to streamline EU legislation on environmental impact assessments. The new draft Directive is intended to lighten administrative burdens and make it easier to assess the potential impacts of major projects, without weakening existing environmental safeguards.

In particular, it seeks to strengthen the quality of the

Doggerbank, a biodiversity hotspot and important fish nursery for species such as plaice in the middle of the North Sea.



Alien species Japanese knotweed, Fallopia japonica.

assessments by improving the screening process, setting quality standards for the EIA report and adjusting the analysis of impacts to take account of new environmental challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss. It also seeks to improve the coherence and synergies with other EU laws by streamlining the various environmental assessments and introducing timeframes for the different stages of the EIA process.

The draft Directive is now under discussion in the European Parliament and Council of Ministers.

More information available on <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/review.htm>

Ecosystem Assessments in Europe

The mapping and assessment of ecosystems and ecosystem services is one of the key actions of the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy. Work is now underway to develop an initial methodological framework on biophysical mapping and assessment. A special internet platform has been set up under BISE to follow progress. The results are expected in 2014.

Go to <http://biodiversity.europa.eu/ecosystem-assessments>

A European Alien Species Information Network (EASIN)

In September 2012, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre launched a new information network – the first of its kind in Europe – to enable easy access to data and information on European alien

species. It contains a catalogue of over 16,000 reported alien species in Europe, compiled from a wide variety of distributed information sources.

EASIN also facilitates the mapping and classification of these species by indexing reported data from some 40 online databases. Through dynamically updated web features, users can view their distribution in Europe using a number of selection criteria ranging from the environment in which they are found (terrestrial, marine or fresh water) and their biological classification through to the pathways of their introduction. Further webtools will be added in due course.

To find out more go to <http://easin.jrc.ec.europa.eu>

LIFE-Nature projects approved

In July, the European Commission approved funding for 76 new projects under the 2011 LIFE+ Nature & Biodiversity Programme. Altogether, they represent a total investment of €241.8 million, of which the EU will contribute around €136 million.

Taking place in 22 countries, the projects include, amongst others, actions to improve the conservation of the red-footed falcon in the Carpathian Basin, the Pyrenean desman in Spain and the Adriatic sturgeon in the Po Delta. Threatened habitats are also targeted. One project aims to restore substantial areas of raised bogs (over 2,200 ha) in Northern Germany. Another will launch a coordinated programme of measures to improve the

conservation condition of 23 Natura sites across Southern Sweden.

Several Member States also made use of last year's LIFE fund to help prepare their Prioritised Action Frameworks (PAFs) under Article 8 of the Habitats Directive. The PAFs are designed to better define the funding needs and priorities for Natura 2000 at a national or regional level. As such they will also help countries to better integrate their N2000 funding needs into the EU's main financial instruments over the next budget period (2014–2020). *More information available under: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/publications/lifepublications/compilations/nat.htm>*

New 'BEST' Projects funded

The BEST Preparatory Action is an EU fund designed to promote conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU's Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories. A total of 16 projects

have been selected for financing over the past two years (nine in 2011, seven in 2012).

Located in different regions of the world from the South Pacific, Indian Ocean, and the Caribbean to French Guyana, Greenland and the Antarctic, the projects foresee a range of activities such as designating and managing terrestrial and marine protected areas, combating invasive alien species, using ecosystem services for climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as networking, education, capacity building and outreach activities.

For further information go to: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/2020.htm#best>

New handbook on financing biodiversity through EU structural funds

The Interreg funded SURF-nature project brought together partners from 10 Member States to look at ways of improving the uptake of funding opportunities for nature conservation and

A new LIFE project is underway to restore degraded bogs in Northern Germany.



biodiversity under the existing and future European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The results have now been summarised in a new handbook on financing biodiversity in the context of ERDF. It offers practical guidance drawn from the lessons learnt from this important project.

Project website:

<http://www.surf-nature.eu>



New protected areas report EEA

The European Environment Agency (EEA) has published a new report entitled "Protected Areas in Europe – an Overview," which offers a comprehensive overview of the current state of protected areas across more than 30 European countries. Amongst others, it looks at how the policy context for protected areas has changed over the years and touches on some of the assessments that have been made to analyse their effectiveness in maintaining and restoring biodiversity.

<http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/protected-areas-in-europe-2012>



Celebrating 20 years of the Habitats Directive and LIFE at the Genk Conference.

20 Years conference on Habitats Directive and LIFE

On 22–25 October, Europarc hosted a major conference in Genk, Belgium, partly co-organised with the European Commission to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Habitats Directive and the EU LIFE Fund.

Attended by over 650 people from across Europe and beyond, the conference's central theme revolved around 'reconnecting': reconnecting nature with nature, people with nature, business with biodiversity, and policy with practice. During the four days, participants were able to exchange experiences and ideas on how to reach out more to society at large and develop innovative, forward looking approaches to ensuring the effective management of protected areas.

<http://www.europarc2012.com>

Let us know what you think of the newsletter

We would very much like to hear your views: how useful is it to you, what would you like to see more or less of, do you prefer to read it on paper or online? Spare us five minutes of your time to fill in our short online survey (just 10 questions) and you could win a copy of the Commission's limited edition Natura 2000 book. Ten copies are to be given away free. Go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/N2000newslettersurvey>

Corrigendum

As the eagle-eyed amongst you will have spotted, an alien species inadvertently crept onto the front cover of the last issue. The photo was of Bombina orientalis and not Bombina bombina as announced. The cover has since been replaced on the web version of the newsletter.

The Natura 2000 Newsletter is produced by DG Environment, European Commission

Author: Kerstin Sundseth
Ecosystems LTD, Brussels
Commission Editor: Susanne Wegefelt, DG Environment
Design: NatureBureau, UK

The newsletter is produced twice a year and is available in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Polish.

To be added to the mailing list, or to download the electronic version, visit http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/natura2000nl_en.htm

The newsletter does not necessarily reflect the official view of the European Commission. Reproduction is authorised, except for commercial purposes, provided the source is acknowledged.

Printed on recycled paper that has been awarded the EU Ecolabel (<http://ec.europa.eu/ecolabel>)

