Green Infrastructure in
Transboundary Protected Areas - Fact sheet

EUROPARC FEDERATION

Conserving ecosystems, providing landscape connectivity

Transboundary Protected Areas' efforts in Green Infrastructure

Paanajärvi National Park (RU) © Viktor Gritsuik

Green Infrastructure and EU policy

Humans depend on ecosystem services. However we keep degrading the natural capital that should be indeed our life support system. Although large areas are already protected under N2000, each year more than 1000 km^2 are subject to land take for housing, industry and recreation. Today about 30 % of the EU territory are fragmented and around 80 % of Europeans live in towns or cities. Health of European citizens due to air pollution and global warming and herewith the quality of life are afflicted by this development.

In its 2020 Biodiversity Strategy, particularly through Target 2, the EU considers Green Infrastructure to play an important role in protecting, conserving and enhancing the EU's natural capital. Consequently in 2013 the new EU strategy to promote the use of Green Infrastructure in Europe was adopted, comprising four main elements: promoting Green Infrastructure in the main EU policy areas; supporting EU-level GI projects; improving access to finance for GI projects; improving information and promoting innovation.

Green Infrastructure is a strategically planned network of natural and semi natural features, that spans from wilderness areas to green roofs, targeting both urban and rural areas. By connecting core areas of protection through corridors, a balanced system of protection and sustainable use and land management is created.

Implementing Green Infrastructure beyond Protected Areas can help to strengthen the coherence of N2000 sites by creating buffer zones and make core areas of protection more resilient. Green Infrastructure is multifunctional and helps maintain ecosystems healthy, offering natural solutions that are beneficial for nature and people, e.g. through delivering ecosystem services like water and air filtration or better protection from natural disasters.

Green Infrastructure allows investments but leaves room for nature at the same time. Herewith it keeps the balance between development and biodiversity conservation or even enhancement. Green Infrastructure is a way to rethink land use, in order for the environment to become an equal partner in Europe's success and not a victim of it.

EUROPARC Federation

The EUROPARC Federation is the network for Europe's natural and cultural heritage. As the representative body of Europe's Protected Areas, EUROPARC is the collective voice for all nature and landscape areas and seeks to build a stronger, unifying, European network organisation that is better placed to support its members and to respond to current and future challenges Europe's nature is facing.

Europe's natural heritage is a myriad of habitats, landscapes and ecosystems, sculpted by nature, shaped by man. It knows no boundaries: therefore, in order to sustainably and effectively manage these natural resources, EUROPARC believes that the future protection and conservation of nature and landscapes is best achieved through networking and cooperation bringing mutual understanding, shared experiences, knowledge and innovation in policy and practice of Protected Area management.

Protected Areas are one of the main pillars of the future protection and wise use of man's natural and cultural resources. On this crowded continent, Protected Areas are more valuable than ever as repositories for nature, sanctuaries for human well-being and drivers for sustainable economic growth. Collectively, these areas provide Europe's ecological life support systems.

The Federation works, to improve the management of Protected Areas in Europe through international cooperation, exchange of ideas and experience, and by influencing policy. Today the Federations' members represent hundreds of responsible authorities and thousands of Protected Areas in 36 countries.

Wetlands connecting habitats © Hainaut cross-border Nature Park (BE/FR)

Calypso, Emblem of Oulanka National Park (FI) © Metsähallitus Parks and Wildliefe Finland

Financing Green Infrastructure

The EU offers different financial instruments for funding Green Infrastructure projects, although none is specifically designed just for that purpose. However a variety of funding opportunities is available like Regional and Rural Development Funds to enhance spatial connectivity, agri-or forest-environment schemes to restore biodiversity and ecosystem functions or LIFE-Environment funds to improve functional connectivity and movement of species. In order to unburden the investment in Green Infrastructure for the private sector, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) discuss options of a financing facility to support natural capital-related investments, including Green Infrastructure projects.

EUROPARC, its Transboundary Protected Areas and Green Infrastructure

As the largest network organisation of Protected Areas in Europe, EUROPARC seeks to disseminate and break down EU policy to N2000 sites and other Protected Areas' needs and feed back the experiences and requirements of its members to the Commission.

Transboundary Protected Areas and Green Infrastructures can be considered twins. They work hand in hand in order to conserve ecosystems and provide landscape connectivity. Indeed connectivity is a key word in both the Green Infrastructure Strategy of the European Commission and transboundary cooperation of Protected Areas. The European Commission highlights the importance of natural transboundary features, like international river basins, forests and mountain ranges to ensure greater connectivity in Europe's highly fragmented landscape. They are an essential part of the continent's Green Infrastructure and many of them belong to or lay in a Transboundary Protected Area, like the Danube, large forests as in Bavarian Forest and Šumava or the Massif of Giant Mountains.

EUROPARC is convinced that by working across international borders, transboundary Protected Areas make an important contribution to connecting habitats and herewith ensuring ecological connectivity between natural areas in different countries. They can therefore be seen as a vital knot for implementing the Commission's Green Infrastructure Strategy, countering habitat loss and fragmentation in Europe.

The annual TransParcNet meeting, bringing together experts in transboundary cooperation in Protected Areas, is an excellent platform for EUROPARC to communicate strategic directions of the EU to the participants and underpin them with case studies from the Federation's certified Transboundary Areas. In 2014, EUROPARC and its network delivered the meeting with a focus on Green Infrastructure (GI).

Practical examples from EUROPARC's Transboundary Protected Areas

Geologic trail on Mt. Canin, Prealpi Giulie Nature Park (IT) © Marco Di Lenardo

This fact sheet on Green Infrastructure is the result of the 6th TransParcNet meeting 2015.

It collates examples and case studies of EUROPARC's Transboundary Protected Areas supporting better connectivity between Protected Areas themselves and between Protected Areas and other natural features.

The little feedback received to the attempt of collecting case studies on Green Infrastructure as well as reactions to the presentation of the Green Infrastructure strategy during the TransParcNet meeting, showed, that the term "Green Infrastructure" is not well established nor understood in the EUROPARC Transboundary Protected Area community.

Certainly many of EUROPARC's Transboundary Areas work towards a better connectivity of habitats and landscape, but very few would put their actions or projects under the topic "Green Infrastructure". When speaking of Green Infrastructure, thoughts of the participants went to eco-bridges and other bigger "green" constructions, immediately thinking, Protected Areas don't play a big role in this kind of Green Infrastructure.

Hence talking about Green Infrastructure to Protected Area managers needs to be done by breaking this term down into specific examples of the management work of a natural place. The good practices on habitat enhancement, which do exist throughout the transboundary Protected Area network, can then be easily accessed.

The production of this fact sheet has been supported financially in the framework of the European Commission's (Directorates General Environment and Climate Action) LIFE+ funding programme for Environmental NGOs.

EUROPARC FEDERATION

Connecting nature pearls along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia

PASVIK-INARI TRILATERAL PARK
Finland/Norway/Russia

OULANKA - PAANAJÄRVI NATIONAL PARKS
Finland/Russia

Kivakkatunturi fell, wilderness of Paanajärvi National Park (RU) © Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland

Activities and Results

- Transboundary parks implemented projects funded by EU's neighbourhood and cross-border-cooperation programmes including: raising awareness and knowledge of cross-border nature protection areas, developing new networks, enhancing sustainable use of natural resources, monitoring joint populations of border-crossing animals and creating new products for the promotion of Green Belt of Fennoscandia (GBF).
- Transboundary monitoring of border-crossing species produces valuable data for nature conservation and management of populations, e.g. joint brown bear monitoring every 4th year, annual water bird registration are considered best practices in Pasvik-Inari. Oulanka-Paanajärvi National Parks share migratory brown trout population, intensively monitored in an EU's ENPI Karelia CBC–funded project in 2013-2014.
- Networking of protected area managers is important, but so is bringing together target groups. Teachers and their pupils in northern Norway, Russia and Finland cooperate under Phenology of North Calotte theme. Students and teachers from upper secondary schools and managers of Oulanka-Paanajärvi National Parks created and put together best practice examples for international youth camps in protected areas, emphasising natural and cultural topics.
- Communication on the Green Belt of Fennoscandia, its purpose and benefits helped familiarise local people, decision makers, tourists and others with the idea and network. New advertisement and documentary films about transboundary parks were produced, showing the pearls of nature and their cross-border history and culture. A travelling exhibition about natural and cultural values of the Green Belt of Fennoscandia circulates in visitor centres, libraries and schools in all three countries complemented by a board game.

Summary

The Green Belt of Fennoscandia (GBF) is an ecological network of existing and planned protected areas situated in the border areas of three countries: Finland, Russia and Norway. It extends from the Baltic Sea to the Barents Sea.

The existing nature protection areas along the national borders form the physical core areas and base of the GBF. Transboundary Parks, like Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park and Oulanka-Paanajärvi National Parks, having long-lasting and active cross-border cooperation, are at the heart of the Green Belt development. They are important cornerstones for the ecological connectivity of the region, providing green corridors for local as well as migrating species.

Biodiversity of the region also benefits the local economy, culture and social well-being in the area. The functional GBF approach is inclusive towards different networks of regional and municipal level actors: Protected areas of differing status, scientific institutions, enterprises like sustainable nature tourism businesses, NGO's, and other bodies, which operate in the cross-border area cooperate to create a network of biodiversity-rich pearls along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia.

Contributing to ecological connectivity in Europe's northern-most regions, the GBF can be considered an excellent example of Green Infrastructure. Not only does it take the physical connectivity of land into account but it is also a tool to create common mind-sets in people living and working along the borders in order to achieve better biodiversity protection and sustainable local livelihoods.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT GREEN BELT OF FENNOSCANDIA AND THE PARKS

Green Belt of Fennoscandia

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation for the development of Green Belt of Fennoscandia was signed by the Ministries of Environment of Finland, Norway and Russia in 2010. These three countries commonly turn the Green Belt of Fennoscandia into a model area where sustainable development is supported through transboundary cooperation.

In the Strategy for the Green Belt of Fennoscandia until 2020 the common goals for future cooperation will be defined. The activities used to implement the strategy will be based on projects and mainstreaming of biodiversity policies into society and cross-border cooperation.

The Green Belt of Fennoscandia forms the northernmost part of the larger network European Green Belt. The European Green Belt spans 24 countries, reaching along around 12.500 kilometeres from the Barents Sea to the Baltic Countries, from there through Central Europe to the Black, Ionian and Adriatic Seas. The vision for the European Green Belt, states: "our shared natural heritage along the line of the former Iron Curtain, is to be conserved and restored as an ecological network connecting high-value natural and cultural landscapes while respecting the economic, social and cultural needs of local communities".

Pasvik Inari Trilateral Park

OULANKA KANSALLISPUISTO • NATIONALPARK

NATIONAL PARK PAANAJÄRVI

Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park

Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park entity was established in 2008 as a result of the long-term cooperation between nature protection authorities in Norway, Russia and Finland dating back to early 1990's. The Trilateral Park consists of three nature protection areas in Norway, one in Russia and one in Finland. The total area of Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park is 1889 km^2. Main themes of the international cooperation are nature monitoring, environmental education and promotion of sustainable nature-based tourism.

The lush valley of the Pasvik River stretches from Lake Inari in the south towards the Barents Sea in the north, appearing as a vital nerve in the mosaic landscape of small lakes, mires, wetlands and virgin Taiga forests. The region comprises a unique nature system where European, eastern and arctic species meet. Here, some of the species reach the ultimate limits of their distribution. The area is also an important nesting and resting place for a large number of migratory birds.

The Pasvik-Inari region is a meeting point for different cultures too. Several Sámi people live in the area: the Northern, Inari and Skolt Sámi. Since the Early Middle Ages, Finns, Norwegians and Russians also have settled in the region. Although different cultures coexist in the area and have learned a lot from each other, they have each retained their distinctive traditions.

Oulanka-Paanajärvi National Parks

Oulanka and Paanajärvi National parks have a common history since the establishment of the latter, in 1992. Together they form a reasonably large (about 1340 km^2) wilderness-like area that has attracted scientists, artists and tourists since late 1800's. The twin park is in its own class for biological diversity: Oulanka harbours more Natura 2000 habitats than any other National Park in Finland. Also, the variety of habitats contributes to the number of species: this region is one of the hot spots in Finland, especially considering its northern location.

The cultural history of Oulanka-Paanajärvi shows features of a transition zone between Finnish and Karelian traditions. Originally populated by forest Sámi people, it developed in the 1700's rapidly to finally be a large village along Lake Paanajärvi shores. Oulanka remained largely unpopulated, which eventually was a blessing for today's nature loving enthusiasts. Today, traces of past settlement in Paanajärvi are clearly seen in fields and pastures, which have remained unforested. They are an important element of the cultural landscape of Paanajärvi.

Cooperation between both parks focuses on development of good visitor services, and joint communication. The cultural heritage of Paanajärvi has been cherished: several buildings of both Karelian and Finnish style have been reconstructed.

The production of this case study has been supported financially in the framework of the European Commission's (Directorates General Environment and Climate Action) LIFE+ funding programme for Environmental NGOs.

Key messages / Lessons learned

1. Nature protection areas, which are physically connected to cross-border protection areas, can be considered as such Green Infrastructure.
2. Twin parks and trilateral parks along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia form a chain of hot spots for biodiversity and species protection, but as well for international cooperation and sustainable development benefitting local communities.
3. People make the difference and a cooperation work! Open and transparent communication increase mutual understanding of different cultures and work environments. That again contributes to solving many of the numerous common challenges: differing legislation and level of protection status, many languages, different terminology and methodologies, working culture, funding issues, border restrictions and formalities, possible conflicts between different interest groups and stakeholders, effects of water regulation and pollution issues etc.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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EUROPARC FEDERATION

MAAS-SWALM-NETTE
NATURE PARK

Germany/The Netherlands

Natural Border Waters

Renaturation Niers River (DE) © Waterboard Niersverband

Naturpark Maas-Schwalm-Nette Grenspark

Summary

The River Maas is a transboundary water fed by streams and rivers from both sides of the Dutch-German border. In order to improve water quality and habitat for aquatic life in the Maas, changes in the tributary waters were needed.

The INTERREG IV A project Natural Border Waters brought together three Dutch and two German water syndicates in the region of Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park, collaborating to achieve better water quality in the catchment area of Maas River. Several sub-projects, reaching from monitoring of water flow and quality via awareness raising amongst farmers through to renaturation of river courses, were carried out.

Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park was responsible for the overall project coordination and communication.

Outputs

- Building of fish ladders and ecological stepping stones to ease way for migratory fish and other aquatic species;
- Restoration of channels towards original water courses of streams and rivers;
- Extraction of pipes in order to restore natural stream estuaries;
- Cooperation with farmers for less contamination of water with fertilizers;
- Installation of common water measuring systems on both sides of the border.

Results

- Creation of larger habitats for several fish species by easing migration through fish ladders and ecological stepping stones next to water mills and dams;
- Common database on water flow and quality for water syndicates on both sides of the border;
- Better communication and collaboration with farmers regarding water protection along streams and ditches;
- Sustainable mutual exchange of water syndicates concerning cross border water management.

Nagrewa
Natuurlijke Grenswatere
Naturnahe Grenzgewässe

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project Natural Border Waters encompassed an area of 60 by 40 km within the river system of the Maas and its inflow region along the German-Dutch border northeast of the city of Düsseldorf.

The Dutch water syndicates Aa and Maas, Peel and Massvallei as well as Rivierenland collaborated intensively with their German counterpart syndicates Niers and Schwalm. Goal of the cooperation was the improvement of water quality and habitat for aquatic plants and animals in the streams and rivers in the Maas catchment area.

Building common measuring stations at Niers and Schwalm river have helped to share knowledge and information on water flow and quality on the German and Dutch side. Natural Borders Waters also supported several sub-projects, spanning the five water syndicate's region. In several places damned streams have been restored to their original water course. Other projects aimed at making waters more permeable for migratory fish and other aquatic organisms by e.g. removing barriers and obstacles like damns. Another focus is the reduction of water contamination by agriculture through close cooperation with farmers.

Fishmonitoring Swalm River (DE) © Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park

Interest in good water quality in streams and rivers is growing on a national and international level.

Especially the European Water Framework Directive sets out strict guidelines that all countries need to comply with. Natural Border Waters has contributed to the growing need of information on, coordination and implementation of restoration measures in transboundary waters.

The cross-border project was the first of its kind in the field of water management. It achieved that water syndicates on both sides of the border recognise the importance of European cooperation when it comes to water quality in the catchment area of Maas River.

Furthermore it was able to inform the public about the aims of Natural Border Waters and its sub-projects in the different regions, through environmental education activities with schools and local communities. EU-financing came in the framework of INTERREG IV A Germany-Netherlands (ERFD), with further contributions of provinces in the Netherlands (Brabant, Gelderland and Limburg), the Ministry for Economy, Energy, Building, Housing and Transport North Rhine-Westphalia and HIT Environment and Nature Conservation Foundation Ltd. Euregio Rhine Waal and Rhine-Maas Nord accompanied the project. From beginning in 2009 to end 2013, around € 3.7 million of eligible costs occurred (92 % co-funding rate).

Biodiversity in agriculture (NL) © Waterboard Rivierenland

The production of this case study has been supported financially in the framework of the European Commission's (Directorates General Environment and Climate Action) LIFE+ funding programme for Environmental NGOs.

Restored creek Lingsforterbeck © H. Heijligers

Key messages / Lessons learned

1. Water is an important cross-border issue that needs international cooperation.
2. Authorities benefit from data exchange through enhancement of planning processes.
3. It is just the beginning of necessary cooperation between German and Dutch water partners.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park was founded in 1976 and a cross-border office was opened in 2002. It brings together project partners, plans, coordinates and implements projects and secures (international) funding. Furthermore it promotes the Nature Park as a place for leisure and recreation through adequate communication measures.

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Video in Dutch
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Video in German
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EUROPARC FEDERATION

Sustainable trout fisheries in transboundary Oulanka River system

OULANKA AND PAANAJÄRVI NATIONAL PARKS

Finland/Russia

Scientists checking the trap net in Paanajärvi National Park (RU) © Markku Seppänen

Background and Objectives

Oulanka National Park in Finland and Paanajärvi National Park in Russia have a joint treasure to guard: one of the last native populations of adfluvial brown trout in Fennoscandia. Finnish and Russian fishery scientists and fishermen alike have been worried for some time about the apparent decline of brown trout numbers in the river system.

Throughout the short northern summer, brown trout run from the 659 km^2 Lake Pyaozero to Olanga River and Lake Paanajärvi (Panozero) in Paanajärvi NP and continue on to three Finnish rivers to spawn. One of them, River Oulankajoki, is part of Oulanka NP. Research revealed that only few individuals reach Oulanka River to spawn. One factor in the decline, although not likely the most important, may be the licensed recreational fishing that is allowed in both National Parks.

The project aimed at creating a sustainable use and healthy status of the migratory brown trout populations in the Oulanka River system, safeguarding the natural reproduction and maintaining the unique genetic properties of the population. The objectives of the common Finnish-Russian project were:

- to study the size, structure and migrations of brown trout across the border;
- to study the intensity of trout fishing pressure and the economical value of fishing on both sides of the border;
- to establish a Finnish-Russian co-operative group to monitor and control the fishing of trout on both sides of the border, on the basis of latest research results and recommendations;
- to increase the general awareness of the values of riverine ecosystems and fishes.

Project details

Project name

Saving our joint treasure: sustainable trout fisheries for the transborder Oulanka river system (Project ID "KA531")

Funding

Karelia ENPI CBC programme (EU, Finland, Russian Federation)

Total budget

€ 639.201

Lead partner

Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland (managing authority of Oulanka National Park)

Partners

Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute, Russian Northern Fisheries Research Institute NFRI, University of Oulu

Associate partners

Paanajärvi National Park, Municipality of Kuusamo, several collectives of private water area owners from the Finnish side of the river system.

Duration

01.02.2013 - 31.12.2014

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

The project's main activities strengthened the scientific knowledge, stakeholder co-operation and public awareness regarding the Oulanka River trout, all of which are critical components of successful long-term fishery management and conservation. Through collaboration of Finnish and Russian stakeholders, a model for the joint management of trout populations could be developed, which can be useful for other transboundary waters where sustainable management of shared natural resources is needed.

Radiotagged brown trout © Igor Tyrkin

Studying fish migration

A tagging campaign of brown trout was carried out in Paanajärvi NP, Olanga River throughout summer 2014. Brown trout individuals (n=352) were marked with Carlin-tags and radio transmitters, allowing the estimation of the total spawning population size after recapture data had been collected with help of Finnish fishermen.

Research showed that about 1200 trout ran to River Olanga, and 1000 further on into the Finnish rivers. The spawning population of Oulanka River, inside Oulanka NP, was estimated to be as small as 120 fish. Two rivers outside Oulanka NP received over 400 trout each. The tagging revealed that the proportion of hatchery-reared brown trout (adipose-fin-cut) in the spawning population was very small in 2014 (2,8 %), even though tens of thousands of 1-year-old hatchery-reared brown trout produced from the rivers' endemic parental fish have been stocked in the Finnish rivers since 2005.

Alarmed by the results, Parks & Wildlife Finland announced a closure on the brown trout fishery in Oulanka NP for a few years at least, in order to help the spawning population to recover. Paanajärvi NP plans to prevent increase of brown trout mortality in Olanga River by limiting number of fishing licenses sold to park visitors. Harmonisation on both sides of the border of legal catch size limit for brown trout to 60 cm has been achieved which should allow more Oulanka River fish to reach their spawning grounds than previously. As hatchery-reared brown trout seem not to survive or adopt the natural migratory life cycle, resources from stocking will be better directed at enhancing the natural production of juveniles. This could be done e.g. by decreasing river fishing pressure in late autumn on the fish that are about to spawn.

Learning about fishermen

A survey was conducted among Paanajärvi NP visitors who bought river fishing licenses in 2013. Among the things asked were: their primary motivation to fish in Olanga River, brown trout catch, opinion about the most important measures that should be taken to safeguard the brown trout population, amount of money spent during fishing trip. A comparable survey was made in Finland; it covered fishermen of all rivers where the native brown trout run and was not restricted only to River Oulankajoki in Oulanka NP.

The combination of data from the surveys' catch reports and the mark-recapture study made it possible for the first time to present a satisfactory estimate on what proportion of brown trout are annually killed by fishers before start of the spawning season. Roughly every third brown trout gets fished before they get to spawn. This level of mortality is considered unsustainable under circumstances where the fishing mortality in the main feeding area (Lake Pyaozero) is on a steady rise. Of the possible measures that can be used to lower the fishing mortality, the practice of catch-and–release fishing was the most popular one among the 1200 respondents to the fisherman survey, rated as the measure of choice by every third fisherman. On both sides of the border, most fishers considered the landscape of the riversides far more important factors in having drawn them to fish there (be it inside or outside the NPs) than the opportunity to fish for native brown trout. The results from the surveys indicate that it is possible to restrict, or even ban if needed, fishers from taking brown trout as catch without compromising the fishing visitors' satisfaction with their stay in the transboundary parks Oulanka and Paanajärvi. Catch-and-release fishing rule could be directed to the endangered brown trout only, still allowing taking other, more abundant fish species as catch.

Telling the public

An awareness campaign on the biodiversity value and uniqueness of the native brown trout population and responsible fishing was carried out in the parks and in public media during the river fishing seasons of 2013 and 2014. It included printed brochures, social media, and appearances in several TV-programmes. The media was particularly interested in writing stories about "adventures" of the brown trout individuals that had been tagged with radio transmitters for research purposes.

The production of this case study has been supported financially in the framework of the European Commission's (Directorates General Environment and Climate Action) LIFE+ funding programme for Environmental NGOs.

Lessons learned

1. The long term collaboration between transboundary parks of Oulanka and Paanajärvi, in course of which a high level of trust and good practices of collaboration and communication have developed, helped to proceed according to the plan and complete all the joint Finnish-Russian activities in a time when the high level political relationships between EU (with Finland as a member) and Russian Federation were quite challenging.
2. Personal relationship and the commitment of single individuals are very important in transboundary projects.
3. The project model and logic can be used anywhere, especially when there are multiple stakeholders/landowners dealing with a common natural resource.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Oulanka and Paanajärvi National parks have a common history since the establishment of the latter, in 1992. Together they form a reasonably large (about 1340 km^2) wilderness-like area that has attracted scientists, artists and tourists since late 1800's. The twin park is in its own class for biological diversity: Oulanka harbours more Natura 2000 habitats than any other National Park in Finland.

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ENPI CBC KARELIA

METSÄHALLITUS

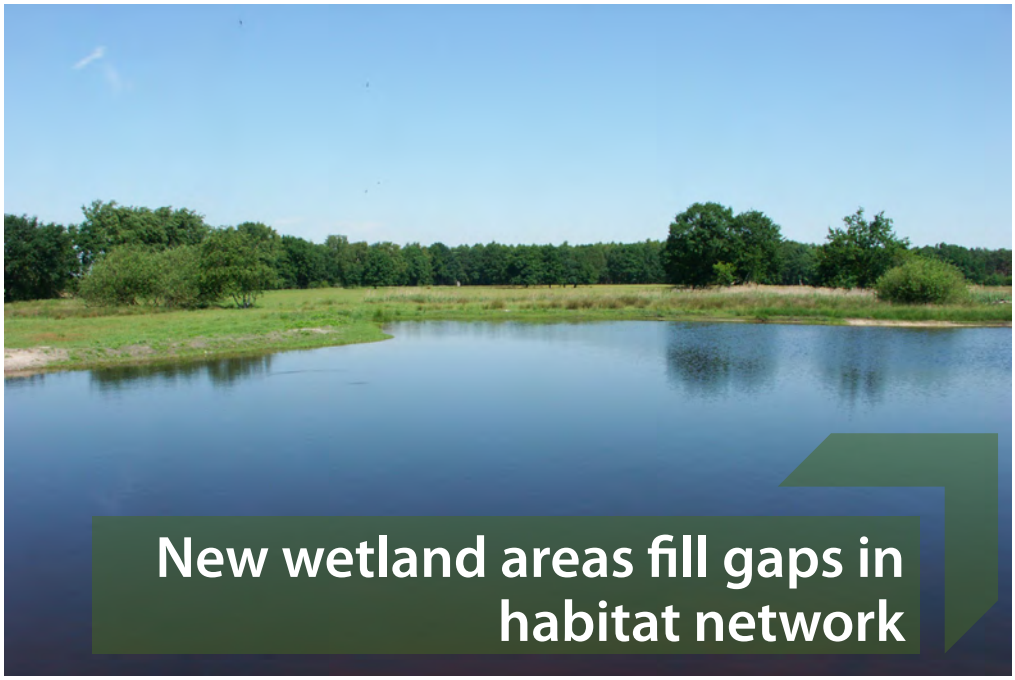
EUROPARC FEDERATION

Network of wetland habitats

MAAS-SWALM-NETTE NATURE PARK

Germany/The Netherlands

Naturpark Maas-Schwalm-Nette Grenspark



New watersurfaces for species protection © Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park

Summary

The project aimed at creating larger core habitats for endangered aquatic plants and animals. Most of the activities took place in areas at the Dutch-German border. The project especially contributed to creating a transboundary habitat network in the context of Natura 2000 sites.

Activities carried out included:

- *Restoration of heath land moors*
- *Creation of wetlands for species protection*
- *Restoration of small wetlands in river meadows*
- *Development of puddles (shallow waters)*
- *Conversion of former agricultural land to wetland protected areas*
- *Installation of bird hide at newly created wetland for species protection*
- *Communication activities, including internet articles, press releases and production of topographic map indicating the network of wetland habitats in Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park*

Results

- Functions of wet core areas in the transboundary network of wetland protected areas in Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park developed and strengthened, resulting in improvement of habitat and herewith higher chance of endangered plant and animal species spread.
- Habitat cluster (in the Netherlands in the framework of resilient habitat network) on both sides of the border further realised.
- European habitat network (Natura 2000) further strengthened.
- Less missing links in above mentioned networks.
- Dutch-German cooperation between nature conservation organisations and respective authorities strengthened.
- Dutch-German cooperation within Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park fostered.
- Wider public informed about project, resulting in higher awareness of importance of cross-border wetland habitats network in Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park.
- Different landscapes in Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park made more attractive for local recreational visitors and tourists.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PARK AND PROJECT

The cross-border Dutch-German Nature Park was founded in 1976 and since then is the interface for transboundary contacts and information exchange. One of its aims is the conservation and development of nature and landscape on both sides of the border. The core zone of the Dutch-German Nature Park consists of an area of forests and nature-/landscape protection sites of 10.000 ha, which are also of importance on a European level (Natura 2000).

Already in 1994 a basic ecological plan with a cross-border approach was created for Maas-Swalm-Nette, including detailed studies for the development of nature and landscape. The INTERREG III-A project "Network of wetland habitats in Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park" helped to implement the provisioned measures of enlarging the core habitats of aquatic plants and animals and herewith reconnect the fragmented wetland landscape. In both the Netherlands and Germany the individual wetland sites form part of the habitat network. On the Dutch side they furthermore are an important link within the so called resilient habitat network of Gennep-Sittard in the province of Limburg.

Lead partner in the project was Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park. They cooperated with parties such as municipalities, forestry departments and foundations from both sides of the border. Funding came through the EU Regional Development Fund, the state North Rhine-Westphalia (DE), the province of Limburg (NL) as well as the partners. With a total volume of € 1.200.000 the project ran for four years.

Several sub-projects where carried out in the Nature Park on both sides of the border. Two silt-up heath land moors have been restored in Germany. With excavators and other machinery, the candle rush that had overgrown the areas, was taken out in order for the moors to fill with water again. Furthermore three large size wetland species protection areas were created, through digging off the topsoil. Shortly after finishing the measures, groundwater from the terrace edge of old Maas Valley filled the ponds. A new humid biotope developed that serves as habitat for animals and plants and also visitors appreciate the new recreation area.

More heath land moors - more biodiversity

Creation of new heath land moors © Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park

On the Dutch side the carried out subprojects included: Restoration of eight ponds through deforestation, bank reinforcement and excavation; removal of augmented topsoil and development of puddles leading to the creation of new wetland habitat; nature development of former agricultural land towards humid nature protection areas by digging off augmented topsoil and restoration of smaller landscape elements.

The project was communicated on the internet and in newspapers to the wider public. Furthermore a topographic map indicating the network of wetland habitats in Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park has been developed. The restoration measures of the project are included in the map and describe in more detail the activities undertaken for those interested in the development of the area. A symposium organized for the 30s anniversary of the Dutch-German cross-border cooperation in Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park provided the opportunity to present the project to the wider public and position it in an international context.

The project made it possible to bring nature conservation organisations with practical on the ground responsibilities together with authorities that concentrate more on planning aspects of nature conservation. Being the interface for Dutch and German issues concerning nature conservation along the border and knowing both cultures well, Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park makes a major contribution to projects' success. Still there are challenges arising in transboundary projects that are mainly the result of different planning approaches on each side of the border.

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Hide for birdwatching © Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park

Key messages / Lessons learned

1. Engage in a real and lasting dialogue between cultures.
2. Patience during the process required.
3. Coordination of planning needs to take place across the border.
4. Communication work essential in nature conservation, for the public to learn about activities.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park was founded in 1976 and a cross-border office was opened in 2002. It brings together project partners, plans, coordinates and implements projects and secures (international) funding. Furthermore it promotes the Nature Park as a place for leisure and recreation through adequate communication measures.

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