

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE AREAS OF THE NATURA 2000 NETWORK

Mariusz Miotke, Malgorzata Dalke-Swiderska, Agnieszka Jedraszak, Katarzyna Kazmierczak
Poznan University of Life Sciences, Poland

Abstract

According to common opinion the preservation of nature is at odds with economic development. It may be so, but not necessarily. The implementation of the Natura 2000 network causes changes in the way of management of many, often very large areas. This mainly applies to agriculture and forestry. For the peaceful relationship between environment conservation and its management it is necessary to reconcile the various interest groups and develop a compromise on the principles of sustainable development. Solution of those issues and conduction of extensive dialogue will be conducive to environmental and economic development, particularly in the region scale. The article discusses issues of potential conflicts and possible solutions.

Key words: Natura 2000, forestry, sustainable development.

Polish Natura 2000 network currently consists of 961 areas. The General Directorate for Environmental Protection oversees the functioning of these areas. Her tasks include record keeping, information management, creating guidelines and recommendations, and control. Areas wholly or partly overlapping with the areas of national parks are supervised by these parks. In relation to maritime areas these tasks are implemented by the Maritime Authority.

One of the forms of managing in the area of the Natura 2000 network is to create a planning document for it in the form of protection and conservation plan. Such a plan is drawn up by the competent regional directorate of environmental protection, national park or the Maritime Authority. In such a plan are contained any actions intended to maintain an effective level of habitats and restoring an adequate condition in refuge areas, where there have been losses in natural resources.

The need to protect the valuable resources within the pan-European system of Natura 2000 and creating of additional areas of reduced activity causes many misunderstandings, which in turns leads to the numerous conflicts. The main reason for this situation are disagreements, a lack of information, misinterpretation of the purposes and principles of conservation, lack of access to quality materials, improperly conducted dialogues and negotiations with various interest groups, including local communities.

The benefits of creation and functioning of the Natura 2000 network

The environmental benefits arising from the

existence of the Natura 2000 network are obvious:

- restoration of habitats,
- restoration of natural river courses,
- stand reconstruction.

Unfortunately, according to common opinion the preservation of nature is at odds with economic development. Yes maybe, but not required. Large-protection facilities, which will be part of the network, are located generally in not very intensively developed areas. Because of poorly developed infrastructure, they have rather small chance of significant industrial or building investments. The existence of networks in these regions may contribute to the emergence of other benefits. The vast majority of areas in their management and conservation plans, in addition to a number of tasks related to the typical passive protection, inventory and monitoring, will provide work related to the active protection, the renaturalisation. The assistance from the European funds can be given mainly for these tasks. These are specific money, which will remain in the protected area: someone will have to perform a.m. works, and then to monitor developed actions, and in the case of infrastructure - to preserve and renovate. There will be also compensation which, taking into account the current economic situation in agriculture could become an important source of income. This carries a specific range of activities with its consequences for the environment and society.

The benefits associated with the existence of protected area should be also taken into account:

- tourism,
- education and training,

- direct sales of goods and services.

This can contribute to an increase in local revenue and the development of the whole region.

The functioning of the Natura 2000 network also has social benefits:

- an increasing employment,
- improving the economic conditions of life,
- improving health,
- availability of land for recreation,
- an increase of social identity with the region and greater civic responsibility for his fate.

Identifying the benefits of the Natura 2000 in particular region is possible by the joint action of the various interest groups who, through various activities and commitments have the right to the particular site. It is necessary to identify these groups in the relation to each area of the network and then incorporate them to work together using the potential benefits for the general sense of protecting the nature and their interests. The major groups interested in the context of nature conservation and Natura 2000 network are:

- landowners,
- farmers,
- foresters,
- local government,
- environmental NGOs,
- scientists,
- local entrepreneurs,
- hunters and anglers,
- media.

Collaboration with these groups, starting from the stage of networking, is needed. In some cases, the inclusion of all groups is impossible, that is why the evaluation of significance of the groups should be done, selecting a group or representative groups that are the most important and include them in the consultation process. In cooperation with these groups it is necessary to support mutual information and consultation to individual actions. Such collaboration promotes the formation of trust between the parties, what may have only a positive effect in the future, especially for the network operations, and thus objects of preservation.

Natura 2000 and Tourism

Tourism as one of the benefits of the network Natura 2000, especially in less

developed areas, it could become the main engine of the region. However, in order to benefit from tourism as long as possible it is necessary to secure tourist attraction against the excessive exploitation through the channelling and optimizing tourism. Such restrictions may be necessary for the protection of habitats and species, as based on item 3 and 4 of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, not all areas of the Natura 2000 will have to have management plans and thus plans for tourism development.

To avoid potential damage to objects of protection it is necessary to conducting tourism on the principles of sustainable development. Operation of tourism in this context will require compliance with the rules that will reconcile the need to protect valuable habitats and species and issues of regional development through promotion of tourism. Such rules have been formulated by Stepaniuk:

1. Inferiority of tourist functions in relation to ecological and conservation function.
2. Optimizing the volume of tourist traffic on the basis of the natural absorption of the environment and tourism accommodations.
3. Minimization negative environmental effects of tourism and its commercial "greening", in all of its aspects.
4. Zoning tourism and its scattering with the concentration of development and tourism infrastructure.
5. Preferring and promoting specific forms of tourism in protected and valuable areas.

These principles are a kind of generalities, which only draw attention to important issues of development of tourism in Natura 2000 areas and around them. How this development will shaping will depend on the of individual natural conditions of the area: different object of protection, other restrictions and other development opportunities, other tourist absorption. In the whole region will be essential goodwill of the local community for such activities and economic development and creativity of local authorities in the development of the region. Tourism is an important element for the economic, cultural and environmental development, so that its development should be created with care and sophistication, taking into account the possible effects, because the potential unwinding of negative actions can be costly and time consuming, and its effects can

only be partial.

It should be also noted that the establishment of the Natura 2000 network operation did not pose a threat to tourism development and should not lead to a reduction in profits derived from tourism. In this context a dialogue between different interest groups is also needed.

Natura 2000 in space management

Development of the region is controlled by a series of laws and plans. These documents include spatial and temporal aspects of development of the region based on previous findings and analysis. Creating the Natura 2000 network resulted in the need to take into account the existence of a network of areas of two aspects: both the spatial and temporal. Developed in 2001, "The Concept of Natura 2000 Network in Poland" has identified some guidelines for ranges of territorial sites:

1. the areas should be large enough to ensure proper functioning of ecosystems in protected regions;
2. the areas should contain complex or complexes of types of ecosystems related to each other;
3. aggregate small areas into larger, including areas with a different meaning between them;
4. the boundaries should be designate including existing protected areas and administrative boundaries.

These guidelines were created to assist in the spatial location of areas and to facilitate their functioning and coexistence with other aspects in the future: business, state administration and regional development.

Passed in 2003, The Law on Spatial Planning and Development adopting spatial and temporal order as a basis for planning contributed to the account of the Natura 2000 network in the planning and development system of the country as an important component of the implementation of the principles of sustainable development. Additionally, this law dictates the need to take in planning the broad public interest. This need is particularly important in conflict situations, where arguments of various interest groups clash between one another. And here once again the need for a common dialogue to seek compromises to achieve a common goal, including the protection of nature, are highlighted.

The Law on Spatial Planning and Development also introduces an obligation of analysis and planning studies on the various administrative levels. For example, a study prepared for the municipality must take into account the possibility of extending the system of nature conservation with new elements, including Natura 2000 sites. This issue is based on the following aspects:

- use, management and utilities of existing areas,
- the spatial order and requirements of its protection,
- widely-recognized condition of the environment,
- existence of other facilities and areas protected under separate provisions.

The only problematic issue in terms of creation and functioning of the network is to dismiss the network in documents created before 2003, where the possible existence of a network in these areas was not taken into account. In this case, the creation of networks and their functioning will depend on the interpretation of the study. In the absence of records to enable the location of the site it will be necessary to amend the study, which involves some costs, and this may contribute to an indolence in this area, but submission of arguments and mutual cooperation, these problems can be quickly resolved.

Natura 2000 in forestry

One of the key issues pointing to the principles of sustainable development in the management of the Natura 2000 areas and around them is adopting in 2008 The Act providing information about environment and its protection, public participation in environmental protection and the environmental impact assessment (which is a consequence of implementation into the Polish legislation of several EU directives). This law requires a forecast and assessment of impacts of all kinds of plans on environment and Natura 2000 areas. This assessment also applies to all investments that could significantly affect the environment.

Interesting and somewhat unique in Europe is to carry out an impact assessments for the basic documents for the functioning of forest management, namely the forest management plan. In Polish conditions, such a document is created for every 10 years for each Forest Division in the State Forests. Preparing analysis

for forecasting and impact assessment of forest management plan on the individual components of the environment and the Natura 2000 areas gives the assurance that the forest management operation will not cause environmental damage, especially to the quality and condition of all items protected in the Natura 2000 areas. At the European Union meeting 'The Natura 2000 and people: a partnership organized in 1998 in Bath (UK) it was recognized that proper forests management is essential for the functioning of the Natura 2000 network in the full aspect. It is particularly important that forest management should be conducted in a rational and balanced way, and especially taking into account the need to maintain a network of old, unexploited stands, valuable because of the conservation of biodiversity. This issue is also included in the evaluation of the impact of forest management plan, where the proportion of old trees is one of the indicators in the analysis.

Analyses performed for the assessment must take into account the individual, often quite specific, needs of protecting habitats and species. Currently conducting forest management not create a large risks for the functioning of the subjects under protection, but during the implementation of certain provisions of forest management plan shorter or longer interactions may occur, which can be identified as a negative impact on the subjects of protection. An evaluation of individual records can identify these negative effects before implementation. The document of evaluation also includes the potential alternative solutions to minimize the identified negative impacts, or determine the conditions under which an action will have the least negative effects. For some interactions or the absence of alternatives it is

necessary to suspend the planned action.

Assessment document prior to its approval, is consulted with the authorities of the nature and the environment conservation, the Regional Directorates of State Forests, NGOs involved in nature conservation and local societies. So organized activity, although initially quite difficult, gives the first positive effects already. This is a good example of that negotiation and dialogue are the best ways for solving problems, and not only the problems of conservation.

Conclusion

Implementation of the Natura 2000 network becomes another excuse to use the principles of sustainable development in planning and action at various levels: on the scale of community to planning in the country. Their use, though it may seem initially difficult to achieve, over time produce results beneficial to the various groups of interest, as well as, or primarily for nature, which is becoming more valuable treasure because of rapid development of our civilization. Cooperation of various interest groups, their dialogue and attempt to find a compromise may contribute to the preservation of valuable habitats and species in European, and these may become the higher value than material resources in future.

References

1. Antczak, A. (red.). *Natura 2000 w lasach Polski – skrypt dla każdego*. Ministerstwo Środowiska. 2003.
2. *Forests in Poland 2009*. Ośrodek Rozwojowo-Wdrożeniowy LP. Bedoń.
3. *Proceedings of a Conference „Natura 2000 and people: a partnership”*. Bath. UK. 28-30.06.1998.
4. www.lasy.gov.pl.