

Balancing conservation and tourism needs in a World Heritage Site, the High Coast and Kvarken Archipelago - SE/FI

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Preserving coastal environment (its functioning and integrity) to share space
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Balancing economic, social, cultural development whilst enhancing environment

2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Ecosystems based approach

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

Management of a protected area of coast and marine area which is subject to high numbers of tourist visits.

4. Overview of the case

Two adjacent areas in Sweden and Finland have been declared a World Heritage Site; they are unique landscapes with some exceptional species of flora and fauna. However, there is pressure from tourism: on the Swedish High Coast the 4500 population swells to over 3 million for a few months annually whilst in Finland's Kvarken Archipelago the population of 2500 swells by 200000 annually. Both countries have developed an effective management set-up and are now cooperating to harmonise their policies and approaches.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

The High Coast (SE) and Kvarken Archipelago (FI) lie either side of the Kvarken Strait between the Gulf and the Bay of Bothnia, the northern extensions of the Baltic Sea between Sweden and Finland. These two areas have been largely shaped by glaciation and the isostatic rebound of the land by 285m following the retreat of the overlying glacier 9,600 years ago. This is the highest such uplift known in the world caused by rebound. The High Coast in Sweden lies about 150 km southwest of the Kvarken Islands which themselves lie halfway along the west coast of Finland. The Swedish High Coast was granted World Heritage Site status in 2000 and the Kvarken archipelago in 2006. The total area of the High Coast/Kvarken Archipelago site is 336,900 ha. The High Coast totals 142,500 ha: 62,500 ha (44%) of this is land and 80,000 ha (56%) is sea. The State owns only about 5,000 ha of the land, the rest is in private ownership. The Kvarken Archipelago totals 194,400 ha, in two areas, 15% being land, 85% being shallow sea. Land area ownership, here, is divided between the state (1,878 ha), village communities, and private owners who own 15,615 ha. Sea areas totalling 70,212 ha are in state ownership. The main part of the Kvarken Archipelago is included in Finnish Nature Conservation Programmes and the Natura 2000 Network.

Terrestrial mammals occurring within the High coast region include the lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), and elk (*Alces alces*). The Kvarken Archipelago is on an important bird migratory route. The two major marine habitats are hard, stony bottoms, and shallow vegetated mud bottoms often covered by meadows of weed. Both are important to spawning fish. The High Coast site is a mosaic of natural and man-made landscapes inhabited by approximately 4,500 people in several small settlements. The Kvarken Islands' population is about 2,500, a third being farmers and fishermen. In the High Coast

region, there are over 3,000,000 annual visitors whilst in the Kvarken, 200,000 tourists visit each year largely between June to August. Their numbers are increasing. There is also a short period of winter sports in March with the sea frozen for almost five months in winter. The thick ice cover makes it possible to do cross-country skiing, ice-fishing, skating and even driving cars on the ice is common. Other developmental pressures in this unique World Heritage Site include construction of masts and wind turbines and dredging of shallow areas.

b) Objectives

Effective management of a world heritage site with competing interests (tourism).

6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)

a) Management

In Sweden, a management committee has been formed for the High Coast area with representatives of the County Administrative Board, two municipalities and the County Forestry Board. In Finland, the Ministry of the Environment administers the area through the Forest and Park Service and the West Finland Regional Environmental Centre. The Ministry of the Environment, has the overall governing role for environmental protection including planning work. The West Finland Regional Environmental Centre and the Forest and Park Service are mainly responsible for the observance of the environmental legislation within their administration area. However, it has been recognised that a broad and co-operative approach is needed for the management and development of the site as a whole. Therefore, during 2002-2003, Finnish and Swedish environmental authorities completed a study to find a common basis for all land-use and management planning in the Northern Kvarken. The study identified objectives and guidelines for the conservation and management of habitats and species in protected areas. The overall objective is that Sweden and Finland should follow the same principles when detailed conservation and management plans are prepared for different parts of the Kvarken area.

b) ICZM tools

Management is a complex issue in this World Heritage Site due to the amount of land in private ownership. There are management plans for all of the Nature Reserves and the National Park in Sweden. The Swedish site falls within the jurisdiction of two municipalities, both of which adopted development plans in 1990. A management plan for the area now prescribes policies for the long-term development, focusing on the management of its special assets: the geological and biological phenomena related to land uplift, the marine environment and the landscape. The environmental conservation legislation in Finland provides good protection of the nature conservation values of the Kvarken Archipelago e.g. environmental impact assessments are required for the establishment of wind power stations

Both countries recognise that in order to promote sustainable development, it is important that practices like farming, forestry, fishing, and other small-scale business continue. These activities promote high values within the rural landscape and the cultural history.

The marine areas also need special consideration: eutrophication is still one of the most serious threats for the marine environment in the Baltic Sea. Cargo ship traffic in the Bothnian Bay involves risks with regards to oil and chemical discharge accidents. The levels of persistent toxic organic compounds have been a problem in the Bothnian Bay and wastewater from the bleaching process of the pulp industry is the most significant source of persistent organic substances: dioxin is still a problem in fish. With respect to air pollution, the levels of ozone, considered to be harmful to the vegetation, exceed the critical limits every year. Some of these problems are being dealt with in a Baltic Sea-wide context through the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM).

Effective measures have already taken to prepare for the increasing number of tourists i.e.

1. planning for recreation and tourism with the purpose of channelling the tourism to areas that can support visitors and to suggest suitable forms of tourism in these areas.
2. Development of systems to monitor visitors in protected areas.
3. Development of indicators of ecological, social, and cultural changes.
4. Improvement of supervision, guidance, service, and infrastructure.

This has involved signing agreements with entrepreneurs that are active in Natura 2000 areas. In these agreements, the entrepreneurs have agreed to follow an environmental policy and to train guides.

Preparations are also underway to eco-label the entire area and the enterprises operating there.

Although the High Coast and the Kvarken Archipelago have their own management plans they are being harmonised according to common guidelines.

7. Cost and resources

No costs are available.

8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)

At present, 80% of the High Coast and one third of the Kvarken Archipelago land area is protected in various ways. There are a number of interpretation centres, including a Nature Centre, and six additional tourist centres open during the summer. In addition there are substantial museums near the site. There are a large number of hotels, cabins, hostels and camping grounds within the site. Camping is actually permitted in any area for periods of up to 24 hours. There are also many hiking trails, including the 127 km High Coast trail, and biking, climbing, canoeing and fishing are popular. In the Kvarken, summer cottagers and sailors are the main visitors with 5,000 registered small boats in the islands. The provision of infrastructure has begun e.g. old coastguard and pilot stations will become bases for guided walks; and canoeing, fishing, hiking, bird-watching are being actively promoted.

9. Success and Fail factors

The multiple ownership of the High Coast area and the original lack of a single management agency or policy presented initial problems for unified management of the area. In the Kvarken islands, farming and forestry has increased the acid water run-off from drained sulphate-rich soils and reduced fish populations. The continual dredging of boat channels creates some disturbance.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

11. Prepared by

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12. Verified by

It has not been possible to verify this case.

13. Sources

- High Coast / Kvarken Archipelago Sweden / Finland (2008) World Conservation Monitoring Centre UNESCO - World Heritage Nomination - The High Coast (Sweden) [downloadable from www.ymparisto.fi]
- Ollqvist, S. & Rinkineva-Kantola, L. (2004). The Kvarken Archipelago. Presentation of World Heritage Site as a Transboundary Nomination and Complement to the High Coast World Heritage. Forest and Park Service. [downloadable from www.kvarken.fi as 7 separate PDF documents, 27MB total]
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High Coast Maritime Heritage (439.11 KB) 