

# Managing tourism in a coastal national park, Kemeris - LV

## 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
- Participation
- Ecosystems based approach
- Socio-economic
- Technical

## 3. Experiences that can be exchanged

Integrating the needs of managing a coastal national park with the often conflicting demands that visitors bring. Zoning a national park for human use of the local inhabitants within the park, strict protection areas and other conservation areas as well as beach and other areas for tourists.

## 4. Overview of the case

Kemeris National Park has, over the last ten years, been managing the different demands placed upon the Park through a system of zoning. The Park has a legal mandate not only to conserve species and habitats but also to promote sustainable tourism.

## 5. Context and Objectives

### a) Context

Kemeris National Park (Kemeris NP) was established in 1997, is situated ca. 50 km west of Riga and is 40,119 ha. in size: 38,165 ha. land and 1,954 ha. marine. There are about 3,500 inhabitants living in the Park. The habitats of Kemeris NP include forests (57%), swamps (24%), water (11%) and grasslands(6%); altogether 26 habitats of the Habitats directive. The park is a proposed Natura 2000 site. Lake Kanieris, within the Park, is an internationally important wetland, one of the richest lakes in Latvia in terms of ornithology and especially protected species of plants e.g. about 9% of the world population of the black stork (*Ciconia nigra*) and about 12% of the world population of the lesser spotted eagle (*Aquila pomarina*) breed in Latvia with significant numbers in the park.

The presence of a recreational beach means that coastal habitat protection needs to be approached in an integrated way due to the presence of primary and secondary dunes and old growth pine forests. In the river mouth and the shallow coastal zone, species of migratory birds require relatively quiet environments for feeding and resting.

### b) Objectives

The NP has seven major objectives of which two are: 'To preserve the natural coastal habitats, dominated by untouched beaches, dunes, abrasion coasts, untouched forest habitats and river mouths rich in characteristic species' (Objective II) and

'To further the development of sustainable tourism' (part of Objective VII). With respect to tourism, the goals are to improve the quality of Kemeris NP tourism; to develop co-operation with tourism businesses that are located in the Park in order to create a united strategy and action plan for sustainable tourism development; and to elaborate and implement a business plan for the development of tourism products in the park to achieve an independence from government financing.

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

### a) Management

The Kemeris NP Administration is responsible for running the Park. It falls under the Ministry of the Environment. It also ran a LIFE project.

### b) ICZM tools

A Management Plan for Kemeris NP, together with guidelines for its practical implementation, was elaborated (2000-2002) by the Danish consulting company CarlBro in collaboration with Naturplan (Denmark) and Kemeris NP Administration. It was financed by the Ministry of the Environment of Denmark, DANCEE and the Government of Latvia. It was completed in 2002 and elaborated for a period of 8 years from 2002 to 2010. The employees of Kemeris NP as well as municipalities and local stakeholders were involved in its preparation. The Plan looks beyond the eight year time horizon and offers a vision of the future that can be shared and worked together for all. The coastal protection activities involve the elaboration of a recreation plan, improvement of the parking areas and controlling activities on the dunes (such as building and use of vehicles).

In order to begin the implementation of the Management Plan, funding from the LIFE III programme was sought. At the beginning of the project (2002-06), large parts of the park were not in a good state of conservation. The outer rim of the raised bog was drying out as a result of a series of ditches dug in the 1930s and parts of the natural riverbeds were transformed into artificial drainage systems, thereby preventing the seasonal flooding that is so important for the birds. There were also more recent pressures from housing and recreation. The main nature management actions in the plan included the restoration of 105 ha. of natural flood plain meadows along the river Slampe, in close cooperation with landowners and farmers, and the restoration of the natural hydrological regime of the active raised bog (4,635 ha.) through the blocking of ditches. At the same time, the level of 4.5 km of forest roads was raised to compensate for the rising level of ground water as a result of blocking the ditches. Land has also been purchased. Before the LIFE project started, the state owned 130.5 ha. of meadow-land. During the project, four more land plots totalling 163.2 ha. were purchased from private owners. 100 ha. was also purchased by the National Park using Dutch government finance through the EECNET Action Fund.

Within this conservation context, Kemeris is also mandated by law "to promote non-deteriorating economic activities (e.g. logging) as well as nature tourism and ecological education" and is dedicated to develop sustainable tourism. In doing so the Park involves all relevant stakeholders viz. representatives of the tourism sector, other economy sectors, local residents and municipalities. It is done through a tourism strategy and action plan and the eco-tourism products are guided excursions, walks, sunbathing, swimming, sailing, bird-watching, bicycle rental, boating, fishing and horse riding. Health resorts also feature prominently with several sanatoria in the area. Zonation of tourism & recreation possibilities in Kemeris NP has been elaborated based on Nature quality, accessibility (some strict protection areas are off-limits to visitors) and the interests of nature protection.

## 7. Cost and resources

The cost of the Life project to begin implementation of the Management Plan was €1,321,000. The EECNET Action Fund contributed €105,000 for land purchase and urgent management.

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

All the objectives of the LIFE project were fully met. The work to restore the natural flood plain meadows along the river Slampe were started earlier but completed under LIFE. This was particularly innovative as it involved the full-scale re-meandering of a straightened river course, a re-naturalisation solution that was new to Latvia. A little-known method

(creating dams from peat using heavy machines) was also successfully introduced under the bog restoration work. Surveys have shown that 90% of the visitors give a satisfaction rating to the Park. Tourism income is reducing the amount of forest tree-felling otherwise needed for the NP budget.

## 9. Success and Fail factors

There are still some problems with landowners concerning the management of the meadows. They largely stem from insufficient information about the activities of the NP concerning the sustainable use of the territory. However, for landowners there are real concerns about restrictions on economic activities in the NP, especially in the protected areas and the vexed question of compensation. The best long-term solution is land purchase by the Park for ensuring nature conservation needs. Land purchased to date is registered in the state name and in the future it will only be used for nature conservation purposes. This external funding in the early life of the NP were very important for ensuring a management plan was drawn up and initially implemented.

In the largest part of Kemerli NP there are mainly low quality gravel roads. Many of them are passable by car only in the dry summer season, in any other time off-road jeeps, bikes, horses or going by foot need to be used. The existing infra-structure is not appropriate for an increased flow of visitors with a lack of walkways and resting-places. There are also not enough car parking places. Water fowl and game hunting in the park is not conducive to increased numbers of animals/species and makes them nervous of humans. The carrying capacity has not yet been calculated for the different visitor uses.

## 10. Unforeseen outcomes

Rural landscapes around the larger cities (Riga and Jurmala) are threatened by expansion of urban areas and intensive forest logging (particularly in private forests) with, thereafter, natural succession of bushes. The current economic situation is exacerbating this situation.

## 11. Prepared by

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## 12. Verified by

It has not been possible to verify this case.

## 13. Sources

- Management Plan Of Kemerli National Park 2002-2010 (2002) Carl Bro. (Denmark) & Kemerli NP Administration.
- Mitraju aizsardziba Kemeru nacionalaja parka (2007) Kemerli National Park
- [www.kemerli.gov.lv](http://www.kemerli.gov.lv)
- [www.eeconet.org](http://www.eeconet.org)



Management plan of Kemerli NP (1.38 MB) 