

Management of coastal Natura 2000 habitats, Kopu peninsula - EE

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Preserving coastal environment (its functioning and integrity) to share space
- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Sound use of resources and promotion of less resource intensive processes/products

2. Key Approaches

- Participation
- Ecosystems based approach

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

To ensure the favourable conservation of Natura 2000 areas through managing semi-natural habitats, directing the visitor flow and conducting public awareness actions.

4. Overview of the case

A management plan was drawn up for coastal, island Natural 2000 sites to prevent loss and damage due to an increasing visitor numbers.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

Kõpu Peninsula, on the westernmost tip of Hiiumaa Island in Estonia, harbours a complex and highly diverse range of habitat types in a relatively small area, making it a biodiversity hotspot. There are no less than 23 habitat types, including eight priority habitats such as grey dunes, Baltic coastal meadows, bog woodlands, western taiga and wooded meadows. In order to assure the long-term protection of these important nature values, a process was initiated in 2000 to establish a national park on the Kõpu peninsula. Conservation areas cover 3,531 ha. of the peninsula, which is mostly in State ownership. The coastal meadows of Paope are important resting areas for Barnacle geese.

As a result of its scenic attraction, Kõpu, with only 29 villages and approximately 300 inhabitants, is under increasing pressure from the visiting tourists and recreationists (some 60,000 visitors per year). There is, however, a lack of facilities available to these visitors to channel them away from sensitive areas. The habitats also face a range of other threats: the meadows and grasslands are becoming overgrown and neglected now that they are no longer used for haymaking and grazing, while the commercial value of the peninsula's forests are also at risk.

b) Objectives

The overall goal was to ensure a favourable conservation status to the various habitats on the peninsula. Other objectives were improving environmental awareness of the public, directing the flow of visitors, planning and implementing management activities, restoring and managing semi-natural habitats.

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

a) Management

The Hiiumaa Protected Areas Administration is responsible for the management of areas of special national importance on Estonia's second-largest island. They worked together with the State Forest Management Centre (SFMC), Kõrgessaare Municipality, the NGOs Estonian Environmental Investment Centre, Arhipelaag, the Educational Society EDU, the Hiiumaa Forest Society and Kõpu Boarding School.

b) ICZM tools

Finding ways to channel the large number of visitors to attractive sites without damaging nature values was one of the main challenges to be tackled. The first step was to draw up a detailed management plan and zoning scheme for planning visitor management and then beginning the implementation process. Thus, some basic facilities were provided to re-direct visitors away from the most sensitive areas. This was further supported by various dissemination activities aimed at the local community and visitors, such as a permanent exhibition, a seminar room and a nature trail at Ristna Nature School. The management plan also elaborated other activities required to ensure the favourable conservation status of the complex mosaic of habitat types e.g. 292 ha of meadows and grasslands were cleared of overgrowth before re-introducing regular management such as grazing and mowing.

The management plan, which covered 14 sites over the ten year period of 2007-2016 is an important tool for the future management of the area. The plan defines the management actions required and the parties responsible for each action. It is being implemented by the State Nature Conservation Centre. The plan will allow the continuation of the restoration and management of the semi-natural habitats through five-year contracts on habitat management and agri-environmental subsidies. Local farmers are responsible for the maintenance work and application of these subsidies. A total of 22.5 ha, out of the planned 30 ha, of various kinds of semi-natural habitats have been restored, including coastal and wooded meadows. Some 6.4 km of fencing was installed, including approximately 3 km of traditional wooden fences.

Management through grazing/mowing was introduced on a total of 210-292 ha of semi-natural habitats (or 70-90% of the area targeted). Restoration and management actions were mainly implemented by local farmers with national semi-natural habitat grant support, although the level of support was considered low compared with the costs. The initiative was supported by publications on the recreational possibilities in the project areas and the sites have proved popular with both local residents and tourists. Activities such as fence-building, painting, photography and handicrafts were organised for the young people of Hiiumaa, helping to promote the Natura 2000 network. Other activities included a web portal about the restoration work and the natural values and recreational possibilities of the Kõpu Peninsula.

7. Cost and resources

The total budget was € 412,891.00. This included a contribution from the LIFE programme of €176,304.00.

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

A network of well-structured recreational sites was established on Kõpu Peninsula to direct recreational use and to prevent unnecessary human impact on valuable dune and other coastal habitats. The management plan is not a legal document but instead a series of guidelines; this is because both society and nature are in a constant state of flux and these processes cannot be predicted with precision.

9. Success and Fail factors

The nature conservation status of the areas under management has been improved through the establishment of Special Protection Area (SPA) status for Hirmuste, Kõpu and Suureranna. Nature conservation areas were also created at Paope and Kõpu.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

Ristna Nature School was renovated and opened with a permanent exhibition on Natura 2000 values, attracting more than 1,000 visitors during the first season.

11. Prepared by

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12. Verified by

It has not been possible to verify this case.

13. Sources

- Euroopas Väärtustatud Elupaigatüübid, Taime- Ja Loomaliigid Kõpus (2006) Riiklik Looduskaitsekeskus
- <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/>
- <http://www.poolsaar.ee>
- Kõpu poolsaare NATURA 2000 elupaikade kaitse korraldamine (Management of Natura 2000 habitats of Kõpu peninsula) (undated) Riiklik Looduskaitsekeskus Hiiumaa talitus (State Nature Conservation Centre Hiiumaa department)



Kopu poolsaare natura 2000 elupaikade kaitse korraldamine (802.33 KB)

