

A Board of Trustees for the Natural Reserve of the Santoña-Noja Marshes to Ensure Public Participation In Decision-making - ES

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

- Participation

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

The Board of Trustees is an administrative body which involves all the relevant actors (i. a. Cantabria Government, State Administration, city Councils, farmer and agricultural organizations, land owners and environmental associations), and includes their interests and opinions in the decision-making of a protected area, with the aim of ensuring an integrated natural resources management.

4. Overview of the case

Santoña, Victoria and Joyel Marshes Natural Park, is an important wetland in terms of ecological values and is protected by several administrative figures. It is shared between 11 municipalities with the consequent anthropogenic pressures. The Board of Trustees is an administrative body to ensure the participation of all the relevant actors in the decision-making of the protected area.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

The Santoña, Victoria and Joyel Marshes Natural Park is a protected area composed of 3 main areas located in Cantabria (Spain): the Ason River estuary and the salt marshes of Victoria and Joyel. This area is the main wetland in the Cantabria coast. It occupies 3,866 ha. shared among 11 municipalities. This wetland is crucial in terms of ecological values: it has some of the richest salt marsh vegetation and macro-invertebrate communities in the region's estuaries; 13 habitats included in the Habitat Directive have been identified. It is the most important wetland for shorebirds in the north of Spain, being labelled as a wetland with importance for several hibernating populations and provides refuge to around 20,000 waterbirds in specific periods. This ecosystem has a high ecological value and is protected as a Nature Reserve, an SCI (Habitat Directive), a SPA (Birds Directive) and a RAMSAR site. However, during the last century, the natural characteristics of this estuary were modified as a consequence of anthropogenic activities. The main pressures are land reclamation and urban/industrial discharges into the water, dredging harbour activities associated to maritime navigation. The Natural Reserve was created in 1992 by the Congress; the competences were transferred to the Cantabria Government in 2007 along with the creation of a Board of Trustees in order to ensure the protection of the wetland and promote an integrated natural resources management.

b) Objectives

The general objective of the Board of Trustees is to be a public participation organism in the Natural Park Management, integrating Public Administrations, owners and other relevant social and economic interests, as well as the conservation associations with similar aims to those established by the Park. The specific objectives are the following: (1) Inform about the Natural Resources Zoning Plan, the Natural Resources Management Plan, the different sectoral plans, the annual activities, Works and Investments Plan, the projects and regulations affecting the Natural Park values, and the applications for subventions for the development of works in the Natural Protected Area or its Socio/economic Influence Area; (2) Elaborate the required technical reports and the proposals for the improvement of both the natural resources management and the population's quality of life; (3) promote the development of studies, research, and educative and cultural activities related to the Park to enhance dissemination of results; (4) promote the development of agreements; (5) monitor the fulfilment of the regulations of the Park; (6) propose the modification of the limits of the Park or inform about the proposals of other Administrations; (7) approve the Annual Report of activities and results. The Board of Trustees was created in 2007 and its specific goals are defined every year.

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

a) Project Management

This Board of Trustees is composed of 27 people, with representatives from:

- the Directorate Generals (DG) of Biodiversity (5), Legal Service (1), Fisheries and Food (1), Zoning and Urban Environmental Assessment (1), Environment (1); Cantabria Department of Culture, Tourism and Sports (1); Cantabria Coastal Demarcation (1); and the Cantabria Hydrographical Confederation (1);
- each of the 11 City Councils (11);
- agricultural (1) and farmer associations (1), conservationist associations (1)
- University of Cantabria (1).

The Natural Reserve is managed according to an integrated approach which considers the interests and the opinions of all the sectors affected by, or affecting, the Natural Park.

b) ICZM tools

The category of this ICZM initiative is an integration and participation tool.

The Board of Trustees Plenary will meet, at least once a year and as many times as necessary to achieve the assigned tasks. They will meet also when one third of the Plenary requests it. The Working Groups meet as much as needed until the assigned task has been completed. The issues to deal with are structured as follows: planning, active management, basic management, public use and socio-economic development. The meetings strictly follow the defined agenda and a debate between the Trustees is promoted after each issue exposition with the aim to achieve a more participatory and consensus-based result. The agreements are adopted by simple majority. Amongst the documentation provided in the meetings, is a questionnaire to make proposals for DG Biodiversity; these proposals are prioritised and ranked depending on the interest, budget availability or compatibilities with the aims of the Park.

In the planning tools category it is interesting to mention the Natural Resources Zoning Plan (which proposes measures for conservation, improvement and sustainable utilization of the natural resources), the Natural Resources Management Plan (the instrument to achieve the objectives proposed by the NRZP, specifying the park objectives, budget, period, etc.) and the Sustainable Development Plan (an integrated plan designed by the Association of Sustainable Municipalities and prepared by a mixed and inter-disciplinary team to co-ordinate the municipal activities).

7. Cost and resources

The budget for 2009 is €1.009.244. The manpower used for the implementation of the tool is 27 people.

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

The general objective of the Board of Trustees of being a public participation organism in the natural Park Management has

been completely met. The specific objectives defined each year are usually 90-100% achieved in the timescale defined.

9. Success and Fail factors

A factor that was helpful in achieving the objective was the willingness of all the interested actors to be involved and to actively participate. Also the existence of a legal framework promoting the integration and coordination and the creation of Board of Trustees in all the Natural Parks (the Law 6/1992, the Law 4/2006 and the Decree 26/2007).

Factors that hindered the achievement of the goals were: (1) the excessive time dedicated to each topic and the busy agendas of the participants to meet several times a year; (2) the limited projects developed due to the limited budget assigned; (3) the difficulties in achieving consensus (4) the lack of ICZM resources to support the Board of Trustees work (it would be much more effective to bring to the Board of Trustees the consensus-based initiatives already in existence and start working on them, instead of trying to achieve a new consensus. There is a lack of executive structure.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

This was one of the first Board of Trustees of Natural reserves in the North of Spain, and has resulted in a model example and symbol for the others. A widespread feeling of common and integrated work has been promoted and a vision of the common, functional, integrated and participative Natural reserve has been transmitted.

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12. Verified by

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13. Sources

- Decreto 26/2007, de 8 de marzo, por el que se regulan la composición y funcionamiento de los Patronatos de los Parques Naturales de la Red de Espacios Naturales Protegidos de Cantabria.
- Patronato del Parque Natural de las Marismas de Santoña, Victoria y Joyel. 3ª Reunión del Pleno del Patronato (2009)
- Marismas de Santoña (2008). RedMarismas. Cristina Galván & María Recio, IH Cantabria.
- Ley 6/1992, de 27 de marzo, por la que se declara Reserva Natural a las Marismas de Santoña y Noja (BOE num. 77, de 30 de marzo de 1992).
- Ley de Cantabria 4/2006, de 19 de mayo, de Conservación de la Naturaleza de Cantabria.



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