

Regions as drivers of biodiversity management

Prairiedog 2007

- Biologically diverse habitats do not stop at the administrative boundaries of local government. Regional authorities can act as an umbrella and facilitate city-to-city cooperation in biodiversity management.
- Authorities of regions can set the path for effective biodiversity management through measures such as innovative strategic policy frameworks, integrated regional spatial planning, and regional target setting for biodiversity management.
- Regional authorities can act as an interface between national legislation and local-level decision making and implementation.

Developing a regional strategy for biodiversity

While the political mandate and empowerment of regional authorities varies considerably, many do possess relevant decision-making power that enables them to become actively involved at the implementation level of biodiversity management. Beyond the legal duties of regional authorities, there is a responsibility to bring together and facilitate activities of the local authorities within regions. This additional responsibility is especially important for biodiversity as its character and vitality can depend on the connectivity that regions represent.

Regional authorities can catalyse biodiversity management through the development, coordination and implementation of strategic policies. Such regional policies can be extremely powerful for creating a shared ownership for managing

biodiversity in a particular region and can also help guide local-level decisions. To become meaningful these regional policies are ideally prepared in partnership with national and regional authorities, conservation agencies,

business and industry and the local level.

Regional policies can provide a systematic link from national legislation to local biodiversity management, guided and promoted by regional authorities.

Emilia-Romagna: Sustainable fisheries and fishing

The Emilia-Romagna region in Italy with the region of Veneto, the region of Friuli Venezia Giulia and the Consorzio Uniprom as well as cross border partners like the Istria region and Primorsko-Goranska County in Croatia, Norfish, the Federal Chamber of Commerce in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Municipality of Izola in Slovenia, has initiated a project to promote a sustainable development of the fishery sector in the Northern Adriatic area.

The project is working to set up activities aimed at creating a favourable environment for small and medium (SME) fishing enterprises through cross border integration and harmonisation of fishing policies, coordination and responsible management of the sector, an increase in fishing stock available for SMEs, promotion of innovation and diversification of traditional activities, and

Action planning and regional target setting

As an outcome of strategy development, regional action planning, can be based on coherent decision-making processes of land use and conservation. This may include decisions on where to place infrastructure, housing and commercial areas, and on where to establish conservation zones.

Regions can provide regional action plans for the delivery of projects, to set up and manage stakeholder platforms and to develop project proposals with national and international partners. Regions can also co-ordinate the combination of local level proposals for funding and delivery. Also, they may be able to fund small projects directly or to become a major funding partner in project implementation.

Another crucial role regions can take on is to set regional

Regional biodiversity planning catalyses and coordinates local implementation



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targets for biodiversity management and define appropriate indicators that reflect local and regional priorities and that are in line with national targets. With these indicators at hand, regional authorities can also monitor

progress and the success of implementation.

In this context, the identification of indicators for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience and health may be particularly useful. It is possible to

define, for example: 'connectivity indices' that show how well habitats are connected to each other for the passage of wildlife; measurements of the increase or decrease in habitat area; or the status of selected species.

Creating incentive schemes

Regional action: The Brabant-Oisterwijk Appeal

In February 2007, the conference *Regions as champions for biodiversity 2010 – Europe meets Brabant, Brabant meets Europe* took place in Oisterwijk, in the Netherlands. The conference was organised by the Dutch Province of Noord-Brabant, together with ECNC-European Centre for Nature Conservation, B&E partnership, and with involvement from other Dutch Provinces. The 200 participants from 27 European countries discussed the European Biodiversity 2010 commitment and reviewed both the European and the regional agenda on biodiversity by exploring synergies in policy-making at EU-level and at the regional level. The regions and other stakeholders gained insight into the tools available to achieve the 2010 goals, to solve conflicts between biodiversity and economic objectives, and to intensify synergy.

The conference concluded with a strong regional mandate for action on biodiversity, summarised in the Brabant-Oisterwijk Appeal titled *Regions as champions for biodiversity 2010*. www.biodiversitybrabant.nl

It is also feasible for regions to provide incentive schemes to drive behavioural change and the delivery of biodiversity management programmes. Incentives may be devised in the form of direct funding, but may also include the establishment of sponsorship schemes with financial input from business, industry and the banking sector.

Such regional-level incentive schemes can help include elements of local distinctiveness in national schemes, and provide encouragement for specific aspects of delivery or the engagement of stakeholders and the general public.

Some regions have schemes that provide an 'Environmental Performance Index' for business and industry that is incentivised through awards. For instance in the case of public companies, a demonstrable increase in share values through better environmental performance and the consequent willingness of people to invest in them.

These schemes are geared towards increasing the sustainability of the business and organizational operation of a range of bodies, and they often include contributions to biodiversity management and conservation.

Raising awareness among local governments

Regions have a key role to play in the whole field of communications for biodiversity. They are strategically placed to carry out a number of major functions that will drive the process of policy, stakeholder engagement and public awareness and participation.

These include, but are not exclusive to:

- Bridging the gap between international, national and local expertise, by, for example, the organisation of conferences, tapping into science-policy networks, setting up web sites for the exchange and signposting of important sources of information, and by organising study tours;
- Communicating linkages between otherwise distinct sectors such as

business and industry, transport, agriculture, social improvement and health, environment and biodiversity – the key to delivering sustainable development;

- Providing advice and guidance for wider participation in the process in the form of toolkits, handbooks, policy frameworks, discussion forums and web sites;
- Providing platforms for stakeholder engagement and dialogue and means for public consultation. These platforms can also be constructed to allow for the formulation and discussion of policy, resulting in increased ownership for policies and their implementation and the possibility of greater flexibility in the delivery of those policies;

- Establishing linkages to the education agenda and actively involving future generations;
- Providing materials for mass communication, such as press releases, video clips and newsletters.

Regions can initiate and facilitate communication on biodiversity management among local government bodies. Due to their overarching administrative authority, they can often help in arriving at a common perspective towards biodiversity management.



The Region of South Denmark: At the forefront of biodiversity management

In the framework of the Countdown 2010 initiative, seventeen municipalities from the Region of Southern Denmark are now working together to implement a nature-network to enhance the connections between ecosystems and its species, improve the quality of nature in urban surroundings and increase public access to nature for recreational purposes. The remaining 5 are joining the process. They have also produced child friendly educational material which is being used in schools in the whole region.

The Region of Southern Denmark played a crucial role in bringing the municipalities

together by: facilitating and coordinating the process; explaining the meaning of the project to the municipalities; supporting them in their decision making process; providing a platform for exchanges and organizing a party to celebrate the initiative and give it public visibility.

Dozens of children from the region joined the ceremony where their mayors committed to help halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 and signed the Countdown 2010 declaration in which they state all their commitments in order to preserve biodiversity for the future generations. The Region proved

instrumental to achieving these commitments and will continue to provide support

and a platform for exchanges in the coming years.



The Region of South Denmark
www.regionsyddanmark.dk

The Province of Limburg: The most biologically diverse region in Belgium

The province of Limburg, the Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland (RLKM) and the Regionaal Landschap Lage Kempen (RLLK) are involved in the Project 'gemeenten adopteren Limburgse soorten' – each municipality adopts a species from Limburg. The aim of this Project is to encourage municipalities to take responsibility for their biodiversity. By adopting one specific endangered species, the municipality has taken actions to preserve this spe-

cies and raise public awareness about biodiversity and endangered species in the region.

RLKM has supported 44 municipalities by offering them a 'manual' for specific actions to preserve the chosen species. On one hand, these actions will be 'field actions', like digging pools or planting hedges. On the other hand, the actions will be educational actions focused on raising the awareness of the public. Examples of these actions are the organisation of

educational walks, naming a new street to the adopted species, creating a sculpture of the species by a local artists, etc. RLKM and the Province of Limburg have worked with the 44 municipalities to draw a specific action plan and will now support them in taking these actions. On February 19, 2008, all 44 municipalities have signed the Countdown 2010 Declaration in which they detail for the wider public and the international community their commitments to work for the protection of their adopted species, in cooperation with all the other municipalities.

The Council of each municipality has approved the action plan and in most cases the municipalities have already allocated a budget for the actions. The Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland in cooperation with the Province of Limburg was responsible for initiating the process and will now support the municipalities as well as help with the coordination of the project.

Facts & figures

- According to the IUCN (2004), 1.9 million species worldwide have been described out of an estimated 5-30 million in existence
- Temperate Mediterranean forests and grasslands are among the most affected ecosystems. Almost three quarters of these ecosystems have been converted to cultivation.

Urban biodiversity...

is biological diversity of urban areas. It is heavily influenced by the built environment and the economic, social and cultural dynamics of these densely populated places.

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Examples show the importance of regions

As the above examples demonstrate, regional authorities have a clear and major role in addressing the rapid loss of biodiversity and the associated issues. They have a strategic overview and, in many cases, a level of authority that can assist greatly in driving the response to biodiversity loss.

Work at the regional level can be powerful force in steering local agendas for action, whilst providing strong links to national and international programmes.

This document is part of a series of factsheets that are intended to provide guidance and information on biodiversity management to decision-makers at the local and regional level. For more detailed information on how local and regional authorities have contributed to stopping biodiversity loss, please visit our web site www.countdown2010.net/lara or contact us directly. All factsheets can be downloaded from www.countdown2010.net/lara.



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