

MINUTES

2nd Trilateral Workshop

Schloss Marchegg, March 29th 2012



The Project Cross border Ramsar management Morava-Dyje floodplains (RAMSAR SKAT) is funded within the EU Programme Territorial Cooperation – Austria-Slovakia with support from the Federal ministry for Environment in Austria, the Regional government of Lower Austria and the slovakian Ministry for Landmanagement and rural development. The main target is to preserve biodiversity and to foster cross-border cooperation.

Introduction - towards a trilateral Management-Strategy

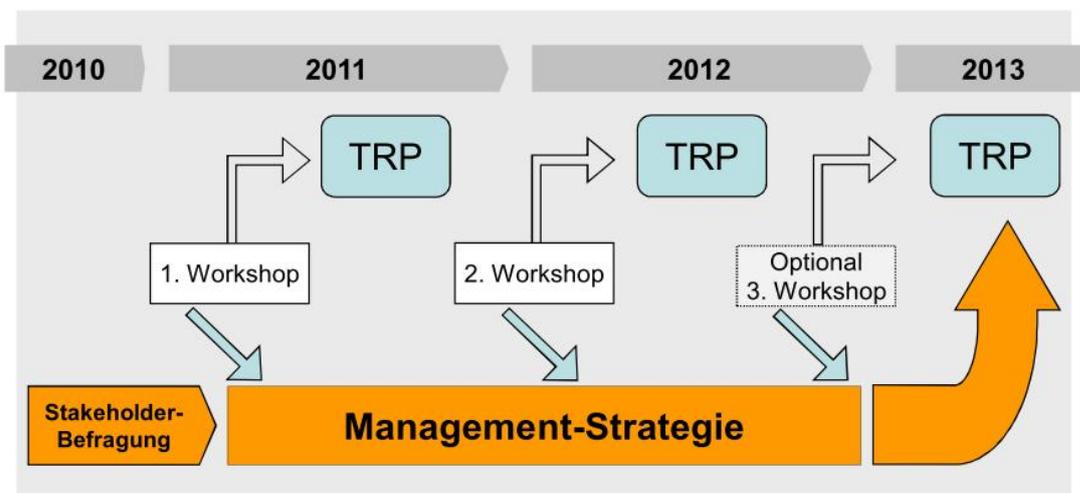
The wetlands along Morava-Dyje-Danube Confluence have been declared as a trilateral RAMSAR Site in the year 2007. The principles of transboundary cooperation have been defined in a joint Memorandum of Understanding in the year 2002. Common objectives and targets of cooperation are defined within the „Common principles of Cooperation“. Once in a year the Trilateral Ramsar Platform with representatives from each country meets.

Still important fields of cooperation have not been targeted in detail yet. Within the crossborder RAMSAR-SKAT Project a common management strategy shall be compiled. The process includes extensive stakeholder and expert involvement. Necessary fields of action are e.g. a common databasis for management activities, common targets and where appropriate joint site management activities (e.g. management of invasive species).

The intention is, that the Trilateral Platform agrees on the management strategy as an appendix to the existing Memorandum of Understanding.

The development of the Ramsar management strategy includes three cross-border workshops, that take place in 2011-2012. The workshops focus on issues of necessary cross-border fields of action in the Ramsar-site, which are not covered by already existing plans and projects (river renaturation e.g.) and where the need of action and need for cross border site management is urgent.

Figure 1. Timeschedule



Working group on Protected area management

1. Background:

The basis for the management of the trilateral Ramsar site is laid within the national conservation policies. The presentations of Janak and Frank revealed country specific differences in the set conservation strategies.

For the crossborder cooperation a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in the year 2002 to agree on joint actions. While targets have been addressed clearly within this document, structures and capacities have not been addressed in a comprehensive way yet. It is stated:

- The TRP stresses the importance of the establishment and implementation of a joint management strategy.
- Transboundary cooperation on all levels should ensure the conservation and wise use of floodplains of the Morava-Dyje-Danube confluence.
- Transboundary cooperation should promote cooperation, information exchange and knowledge transfer in all sectors concerned in the joint strategy.
- Transboundary cooperation should promote transboundary cooperation within the trilateral region in using various funds for the site management.

In the 11th Meeting of the Trilateral Ramsarplattform on 14/04/2010 in Bratislava the TRP ...

- strongly supports the protection of the Soutok as the protected landscape area and steps of the CZ ministry to finalize the process in 2010
- encourages the AT delegation also to establish a protected area management body at AT part of the RAMSAR site to complete a basis for a sound trilateral RAMSAR management).

Furthermore the TRP decided in the 12th meeting in Mikulov to foster the joint work, by defining clear rules of procedures for the transboundary work.

2. Status quo

Common challenges

- Weak law-enforcement: e.g. mosquito control, plans for recreational navigation with motorboats, ..
- Insufficient incentives for proper land-management
- Limited capacities to manage habitats properly; E.g. hay quality is not very good.
- Uncertainty about subsidies for ecological farming from 2014 onward.
- Change in population structure due to iron curtain. There are no (family) networks across the border anymore, the life is separated.

Austria

- The site is at least partly covered by 7 different conservation instruments (Natural monuments, Nature protected areas, Natura 2000 SAC and SCI, Landscape protected area, Nationalpark)
- There is “no legal obligation” to manage the RAMSAR site
- Site management is currently restricted to the Nationalpark Danube floodplains (about 25% of the whole site).

- There are view funding-options for recurring management activities, because the management is linked to EU projects with limited duration – so there is a lack of continuity
- Objectives for hands-off areas or core-zones are clearly missed (e.g. target for floodplainforests is 25%, but currently only 6,8% are dedicated as conservation sites).

Slovakia

- The site is at least partly covered by 6 different conservation instruments: 10 SCIs and 1 SPA with 31.072 ha, Landscape protected area with 27.552 ha, Strict nature reserves
- There is no specific conservation regime for the RAMSAR site;
- State nature conservancy/ CHKO Zahorie has the role as a managing authority for all conservation instruments.
- SNC acts as an advisor. All permissions are granted by the regional environmental offices; SNC advice should be considered
- Management of CHKO is guided by Managementplan for the Ramsar site (prepared in 2005) and by common priorities of the Trilaterale Ramsar Platform (agreed in 2009 Hlovoc)
- There are no instruments for hands-off areas for forest protection zones. The main emphasis lies within proper management by landowners (game-management, control of alien-species).
- There are uncertainties about ownership of land and economic interests, there is the risk to loose contracted areas.
- There is currently no risk of conversion of meadows into arable land, the main threat is land-abandonment

2. Needs

- In Austria the need for a regionally based and legally accepted protected area management body is evident: Main tasks would be to:
 - Raise the awareness for environmental issues
 - improve law-enforcement
 - Implement conservation measures
 - contribute to sustainable development
 - monitoring of target species
 - Crossborder management tasks
- Capacity building for forestry managers in SK
- To coordinate positions on infrastructure projects (e.g. navigational use).

3. Opportunities

- To limit negative impacts of infrastructure projects – e.g. navigational use.
- Common fishing rules for cross-border waterbodies
- Harmonization of water-management plans

- Basis for future protected area management plans (with reference to hunting, alien species control, pest control, ...)
- To create a common identity for the transboundary region and develop a common marketing.
- Perspectives for villages and regional development.
- Common visitor management.
- Common position on future infrastructure developments
- Maintain an important stepping stone along the Alps-Carpathian-Corridor
- Benefit of a common strategy

4. Players

- Besides the national authorities, the transboundary working group on watermanagement and state-border issues is responsible for crossborder watermanagement and international issues.
- The transboundary RAMSAR platform is based on a signed MoU. Still it has low impact on the actual site management. A common strategy and clear terms of procedure are necessary.
- National Ramsar Committees, focal points and representatives are implementing the Ramsar Strategy
- Districts and regions are cooperating in the framework of the Euregio.
- Furthermore there are cooperations on voluntary basis (e.g. NGOs) and within project partnerships.
- Our work can be linked to regional initiatives like ICPDR, and Danube strategy.
- An EGTC is a new international instrument that is currently evaluated within the RAMSAR SKAT project. This instrument allows crossborder budgets, staff and projects according to an international legislation.
- But within all these bodies capacities for actual site management are low.

Working group on Ecotourism

Background

Ecotourism is among the priorities according to the Common Objectives of the TRP. It is of great importance to offer regional development opportunities. The Common objectives emphasise to:

- develop inter-linked educational and information programmes with emphasis of the floodplains of the Morava-Dyje-Danube confluence
- promote eco-tourism and recreation activities in cross-border area
- promote establishment of information and visitor centres in the regions of the Ramsar site.

Furthermore ecotourism has been defined as one of the priorities of the transboundary cooperation. According to the priorities of Hlohovec stress the importance of

- Natural and cultural historical heritage and the need for evaluation of potential for sustainable tourism in accordance with Ramsar wise use concept, raising public awareness through communication, training, and participation, possible cooperation between nature conservation and tourism.

Current Situation

The region is still not well covered in regional policies and activities.

Austria:

- tourism is underdeveloped so far
- In Austria it is difficult to come up with innovations in the region.
- There is a lack of a common info-platform on touristic activities so far.
- There is a lack of tourism guidance

Slovakia:

- Visitors mainly come from Bratislava, but they don't stay over the night.
- Austria is mainly known for its castles.
- Furthermore there are several leisure facilities.
- Villages are willing to improve bicycle paths and facilities.
- There is a concept to establish a series of eco-centers on the SK side.

Project ideas:

- Partnership enhancement
- Promotion of the region
- Recreational values versus natural values

Goals:

- Integration of Nature into tourism
- Enhancement of Ecotourism in the Morava-Dyje-region

Promotion of the region:

- Create a common label for the region
- There were different ideas for logos for the region, but it is clear that one Label/CI should be created or the existing Morava-Dyje-Ramsar logo could be used?
- Ecocentres
- There is the idea from Jozef Rajchl to build Ecocentres along the Morava river, which should be some sort of “Kugel” made of glas – but it is not really fitting into the landscape. But the idea of building little touristic centers along the river was also suggested in the study for the Ramsar Centre.
- Materials to promote region (leaflet, maps, web,..)
- Educational programs for visitors
- Touristic programs (3 days, weekly, Ecocamping)
- Excursions to nature
- Infosystem on events
- Common Crossborder actions
- Ex.: Stork festival
- Define Leader partner in SK for Infocenter
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Recreational Use:

- Improvement of the infrastructure
- The discussion was about what should be built first: If there is no infrastructure there will be no Tourists but whoo will invest if there are no tourists?
- Reconstruction of Ecocamping in Male Levaré (accommodation capacities)
- The two representatives of Male Levaré want to reinstall the camping place around the Lake of Male Levaré. They are very eager to participate in ecotouristic projects.
- Revitalisation of the Lake (Beaches for controlled tourism)
- Bike trails (for better interpretation of Nature/ML)
- Information pathways (ML)
- As the information tables especially at the bicycle trail are quite old and destroyed it would be necessary to restore them.
- Canoying of the Morava River.
- What are the limitations and differences between Austria and Slovak side – how can this be controlled?
- Watching Towers
- Like at the vogel.schau.plätze in Hohenau there should be built some hides for birdwatching along the rivers.

List of Participants:

Name	Organisation
Andrea Koláriková	Trnavský samosprávny kraj, VÚC Sekcia regionálného
Bernhard Frank	Amt der NÖ Landesregierung
Branko Kupkovic	
Dušan Valachovič	ŠOP SR
Gerhard Schwach	Lebensministerium
Gerhard Egger	WWF Österreich
Gernot Haupt	Gemeinde Marchegg
Gottfried Pausch	Österreichische Fischereigesellschaft
Josef Semrad	via donau
Jozef Rajchl	Ecotourism Devinska nová ves
Karin Donnerbaum	WWF Österreich
Margit Gross	Naturschutzbund Niederösterreich
Martin Gucik	
Martina Liehl	Weinviertel Management
Milan Janak	DAPHNE - Inštitút aplikovanej ekológie
Miroslava Plassmann	DAPHNE - Inštitút aplikovanej ekológie
Nellie Gradauer	Gemeinde Marchegg
Ondrej Repa	VÚC Trnavský kraj
Ulrich Blanda	stadtland
Ute Nuesken	Verein Auring
Alexander Zinke	Consultant

Further materials

- Presentation of Mrs. Gailly on the Bestpractice Example – Hostetin
- Presentation of Mr. Frank on the Conservation Instruments in Austria
- Presentation of Mr. Janak on the Conservation Instruments in Slovakia