Integrated development of the Natura 2000 network along waterways

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What is happening to biodiversity in Europe?

- 45% of Europe’s butterflies threatened
- 38% of Europe’s birds threatened
- 40% coastal dunes lost since 1900 (1/3rd - 1977)
- 12% loss of grasslands in EUR 9 (1975-95)
- Loss of natural forest (now 4% of forest area)

Source: European Environment Agency
Biodiversity loss - importance of ecosystem services

- 2005 UN Millenium Ecosystem assessment highlighted importance of ‘ecosystem services’
- The provision of goods – food, fibre, fuel and medicines
- The regulation of the air we breathe and the quality of our waters (also flood protection!)
- Soil fertility, pollination and other essential support services
- Cultural benefits – from aesthetic enjoyment to spiritual solace
EU Action to halt the loss of biodiversity

- 2006 Communication on halting the loss of biodiversity to 2010 – and beyond: Sustaining ecosystem services for human well-being

- EU biodiversity action plan with a clear set of targets and actions to halt biodiversity loss
  - Covers relevant sectors & horizontal policy areas in a unified way
  - Provides a joined up approach by identifying what needs to be done at Community level and at MS level.

Mid-term report (2008): if business as usual, we will fail to meet the target
Critical role of EU nature legislation and Natura 2000

  All wild birds protected + protected areas for threatened and migrating birds

- ‘Habitats Directive’ (92/43/EEC)
  Protected areas for threatened species and habitats + list of animal & plant species in need of strict protection

- NATURA 2000: the ecological network of protected areas under the Birds and Habitats Directives
The Natura 2000 network

A major pillar of biodiversity action in Europe

A combination of species and habitats protection

Habitats Directive ~ 14% of EU - 27 territory
For Birds Directive ~ 11 % of EU – 27 territory

Total: ~ 25,000 sites
~17 % of EU 27 territory
State of play June 2008 - distance to target (level of sufficiency)
Important features of NATURA 2000

- NATURA 2000 is not a set of paper parks
  - Site designation exclusively based on scientific criteria
  - Strong protection system
  - Nature conservation considerations factored into other decision-making
  - Procedure to deal with potentially damaging developments

- Not limited to nature reserves
  - Most areas privately owned
  - Emphasis on conservation and sustainable use (ecologically, economically and socially)
  - Management plans are very useful tool
Article 6 the Habitats Directive

- For sites Member States shall:
  - Establish necessary conservation measures
  - Avoid deterioration

- Prepare appropriate assessment for any plan or project (except direct management of site)
  - Likely to have a significant effect on site
  - Either individually or in combination with other plans or projects
Art. 6.3/4 Habitats Directive, simplified

Possible negative impact on Natura 2000 site? yes

Nature impact assessment If negative

Alternatives? If no

Overriding public interest? If yes

Compensation measures - Commission opinion (if priority interest)
Problems encountered with applying Article 6.3/6.4 (extensive established ECJ case law!)

- no or inappropriate nature impact assessments including poor expert input
- negative results of assessments not respected
- No/insufficient alternatives considered
- no or inadequate mitigation / compensation measures
- no designation or proposal of a qualifying site: provisions apply nevertheless (for SPAs even stricter rules!)
How to avoid conflict?

- integration of N2000 considerations into other sectors
- early planning of projects
- good scientific assessments of state of environment and impacts
- transparency: early involvement of stakeholders
Proactive approaches of Commission - Guidance documents

MANAGING NATURA 2000 SITES
The provisions of Article 6 of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 92/43/EEC

Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites
Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 5(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC

+ important guidance on compensation (Art. 6 (4))
Sectoral guidance documents in preparation

- **On ports and estuaries**
  - Working group established in 2006, guidance document to be finalized by summer 2009

- **On non-energy extractive industries**
  - Working group established in 2008, activity linked to the Raw Material Initiative
  - Clarification of provisions of N2000 assessment requirements as regards extraction of sand, gravel, industrial minerals, metal ore
  - Aim to finalize by April 2009

- **On wind energy and nature conservation**
  - Working group co-chaired by DG TREN and ENV set up in 2007?
  - Several international MEAs also working on guidance
  - Final draft planned for summer 2009
What about Natura 2000 sites on the Danube?

Very large part of the river in the network.
Future Technical guidance on Rivers and Inland Waterways

- work to start in 2009, co-chaired by DG TREN and DG ENV
- bottom-up approach, wide stakeholder participation
- build on existing initiatives and ongoing work of international conventions and the WFD guidance

outputs:

- Web-based guidance documents on management and protection of Natura 2000 rivers
- 1st meeting on 19 February, finalization in 2010
What does the European Commission hope from the Joint Statement about the Danube as regards Natura 2000?

- A very good opportunity for promoting the integrated approach to management of riverine Natura 2000 sites
- Further opportunity for strengthening the synergies between the Water Framework Directive and the EU nature directives
- Excellent vehicle for trans-boundary cooperation with the neighbouring non-EU countries
For more information, please consult:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/environment