

Natural Capital Germany – TEEB DE case study

Protecting wild forests as a regional source of income

The Bavarian Forest National Park

In Germany's first national park, the Bavarian Forest, nature is left to take its own course, with the aim of protecting one of the largest continuous forest areas in central Europe. But nature has its own rules: storm damage gave rise to favourable conditions for bark beetles. This resulted in conflicts with adjacent communities, who feared that this damage would have adverse impacts on the forestry industry. The approach of dividing the park into different use zones considerably eased the conflict situation. The residents' forestry interests are safeguarded in the marginal areas. Moreover, the tourism infrastructure in parts of the national park creates regional income. The core zone permits natural regeneration and creates a space where nature can once again be itself. "I Plant A Tree" is an initiative aiming to protect the environment and climate. It was founded in Halle an der Saale.

Location:

Bavaria, Bavarian Forest

Actors:

Federal state, Business, Citizens

Project description:

The Bavarian Forest National Park was established in 1970 as the first of 14 national parks in Germany. Following intensive use and numerous cases of clear-cutting of the remaining untouched remnants of virgin forest in the first half of the last century, more than 13,000 hectares (56% of the area) are no longer in managed use today. The primary aim here is to ensure undisturbed natural functioning of the forest ecosystem. But the Bavarian Forest National Park is also a regional economic factor in a structurally weak region – above all as a tourist attraction (cf. Job et al. 2008).

What was the problem?

In 1983 a first section was to be designated as a reserve and left to develop naturally. But in the same year a heavy thunderstorm had caused large areas of storm damage. When storms in the following years brought down more parts of the forest, this created particularly favourable living conditions for the European spruce bark beetle. In the 1990s the bark beetle population increased so dramatically that eventually even healthy spruce stands were affected. Whereas nearby local forest owners feared the plague would spread and called for action to combat the bark beetle, conservationists and the management of the national park advocated non-intervention and leaving the forest conservation area to develop in its own way. However, tourist enterprises in the region

feared that the damage to the forest would cause visitor numbers to drop. This gave rise to vehement public protests when the national park was expanded in 1997. When the Bavarian state government decided in 2007 to enlarge the untouched natural zone to 75 percent by 2027, local objectors brought an *actio popularis* before the Bavarian Constitutional Court. In 2009 the Constitutional Court judged that such expansion was compatible with the Bavarian state constitution.

What solutions were adopted and what role did decision makers play?

Today the national park is divided into zones. In the “marginal zone” of the national park, intensive measures are taken to control the bark beetle to protect surrounding areas. By contrast, no intervention measures are taken in the “natural zone”. In the “recreation zone” there are tourist attractions like national park centres and outdoor animal enclosures. The “expansion zone” is gradually to be left to nature, but bark beetle control measures are still permitted there until 2027. Even though it has not been possible to resolve the conflicts completely, this zoning approach at least makes it possible to some extent to cater for different demands in different parts of the national park. Especially since it has become apparent that visitors do not regard the bark beetle damage as detrimental to tourism (cf. Job et al. 2008: 16) and the dead forest is undergoing a natural rejuvenation process, public acceptance has started increasing again (cf. Nationalparkverwaltung 2012: 15). This re-thinking has been due in particular to a visibly increasing focus on natural forest rejuvenation in reporting by supra-regional media, rigorous measures by the national park management to control the bark beetle in the marginal zones, and a more objective approach to criticism in discussions, inspections and dialogue processes.

What has been achieved?

Today 56 per cent of the national park area is heavily protected; the forest on this land is not used for forestry. By 2027 this area will be increased to 75 per cent. And about 40 per cent of the national park area is subject to a requirement to keep to the system of paths and tracks. In a flexible marginal zone at least 500 metres wide, intensive measures are taken to control the bark beetle to protect the surrounding forest. The tourist facilities and the necessary infrastructure are also being increasingly developed. The Bavarian Forest National Park thus provides not only a protected area for untouched nature and its services, but also a central source of income in a structurally weak region of Lower Bavaria.

Literature, references:

Job, H., Mayer, M., Woltering, M., Müller, M., Harrer, B., Metzler, D. (2008): Der Nationalpark Bayerischer Wald als regionaler Wirtschaftsfaktor. In: Berichte aus dem Nationalpark 4/2008. Grafenau: Nationalparkverwaltung Bayerischer Wald.

Nationalparkverwaltung Bayerischer Wald (2012): Jahresbericht 2012. Grafenau: Nationalparkverwaltung Bayerischer Wald.

Ecosystems:

Forests
Lakes, ponds, pools and tarns
Rivers and floodplains
Peatlands
Mountains

Ecosystem services:

Provisioning service:	food
Provisioning service:	raw materials
Regulating service: :	local climate
Regulating service:	carbon storage
Regulating service:	erosion control and preservation of soil fertility
Regulating service:	pollination
Habitats:	for animal and plant species
Habitats:	conservation of genetic diversity
Cultural service:	recreation
Cultural service:	tourism
Cultural service:	aesthetic pleasure
Cultural service:	spiritual value

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„Natural Capital Germany – TEEB DE“ is the national follow-up project to the international TEEB initiative (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity). It was commissioned by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) with funding from the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) in order to analyze the manifold values of nature and of the so called ecosystem services in Germany as well as the consequences of species loss also in economic terms and to make them visible. The project is coordinated at the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ) within the period 2012-2015. More information can be found at: www.naturkapital-teeb.de
