



CHECKING MANAGEMENT EFFICIENCY

Evaluation of German National Parks

Nationale
Naturlandschaften



Foreword

In response to the alarming worldwide decline of biodiversity, in 1992 the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. Germany ratified the Convention in 1993.

The 7th Conference of Parties to the CBD in Kuala Lumpur (COP 7) adopted the „Programme of Work on Protected Areas“ (CBD VII/28, 2004) which emphasizes the importance of protected areas in achieving the objectives of the Convention. This work programme requires the parties to establish at a national level a system of protected areas to be preserved and further developed; it should be representative in a landscape ecological view but also be managed effectively.

On 7 November 2007, the Federal Cabinet adopted the „National Strategy on Biological Diversity“ and Germany fulfilled Article 6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The National Biodiversity Strategy (NBS) formulated a vision that Germany should again create large-scale wilderness areas where natural processes can take place undisturbed. By the year 2020, at least 2% of the area of Germany should be allowed to return to the wild in its own way. National parks are already the „core components“ of natural dynamics in Germany and play an important role in meeting the 2% target.

Despite the designation of new protected areas, a reversal in the loss of species and habitats in the Federal Republic has not been seen; this emphasises how important effective management of protected areas is. In Germany there are 14 national parks, 16 biosphere reserves and over 100 nature parks, which together cover more than 25 percent of the terrestrial area of Germany. With major assistance from the federal government, these areas have made considerable efforts in recent years to develop criteria and standards that are appropriate to examine management effectiveness.

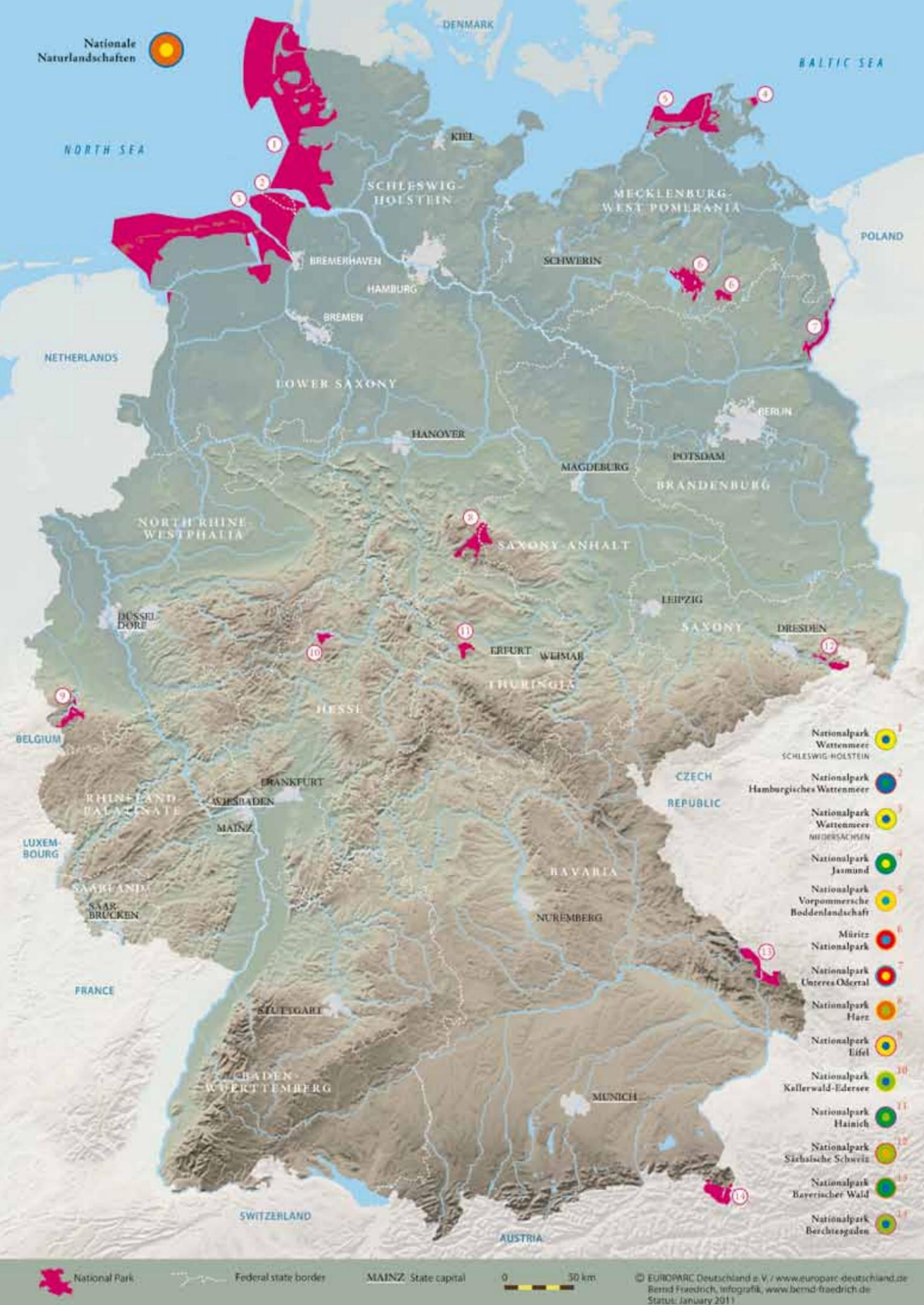


The initial evaluation of all 14 German national parks by an independent evaluation committee was the foundation for further improvement of quality management for this protected area category.

The federal and state administrations of national parks and their umbrella organization (EUROPARC Germany) have succeeded in developing the work in the national parks to make an important contribution to the conservation of habitats and species.

This brochure provides an overview of the evaluation process and the criteria applied, as well as a summary of selected results. It was essential to identify both the strengths and weaknesses of the national parks in order to provide targeted approaches for the optimization of management.

Prof. Dr. Beate Jessel
President of the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation



Background and overview

The „Programme of Work on Protected Areas“ of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD VII/28) of 2004 stipulates that, by 2015, management effectiveness evaluation should be carried out for at least 60% of the total protected area of each signatory state. Following the decision to implement the CBD, Germany adopted a National Biodiversity Strategy in 2007 which states, among other things, that by 2020 at least 2% of the country is returned to wilderness areas where natural processes can take place undisturbed. To achieve this goal, the national parks with their core zones provide an important, but not exclusive, contribution. Accordingly, the National Biodiversity Strategy provides for the designation of additional national parks.

These requirements led EUROPARC Germany, as the umbrella organization of National Natural Landscapes (national parks, biosphere reserves and natural parks), to initiate the development of quality criteria and standards for the German national parks; this was done between 2005 and 2008. The procedure was put together on a broad basis by the staff of the national park authorities and numerous players in the German Federal Environment Ministry (BMU), the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), the Regional Working Group on Nature Conservation (LANA)¹ and individual state environment ministries and several NGOs² such as WWF, the Wildlife Protection Society Germany (NABU) and Friends of the Earth Germany (BUND) (detailed guidance on the development of criteria and standards can be found in EUROPARC Germany 2008 a/b³). The Federal Agency for Nature Conservation supervised and supported the project with a budget from the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.

Based on the established quality criteria and standards, between 2009 and 2012 for the first time all 14 German national parks

were evaluated on a voluntary basis by a special committee created for this purpose by the LANA. This included two representatives of the federal government, four representatives of the federal states, four representatives of science, three representatives of NGOs, two representatives of the EUROPARC workgroup on national parks and one representative of EUROPARC Germany, the German section of the umbrella organization of Europe's protected areas, the EUROPARC Federation. The evaluation dates in the various national parks were each attended by only some of the committee members, but it was ensured that all mentioned institutions were represented. This meant that the composition of the usually eight-person-strong evaluation group differed a little „from park to park“. The process was managed by EUROPARC Germany. The BfN supervised and supported this proposal with the budget of the BMU.

In the course of the evaluation, the committee reviewed the extent to which the defined quality standards in the national parks are already fulfilled, as well as the strengths and weaknesses. On this basis, specific recommendations and advice to ensure the achievements and to improve management effectiveness have been formulated; they were presented in the form of a committee report to the national park authorities, relevant state ministries, as well as the BfN and BMU.

A ‚ranking‘ of the national parks, where they are rated against each other, was not explicitly sought. Differences in the natural environment, the human and financial resources of administrations, the regional environment, age of the parks, culture and land-use history or existing uses in the park do not allow such a comparison. Rather it was to evaluate each national park in terms of its individual strengths and weaknesses. All national parks, including the relevant ministries of the federal states, perceived this process as valuable support for their work.

National parks are designated under environmental law in Germany; they are large scale, contiguous and of a special character. The main part of their area is supposed to be in a condition uninfluenced or only slightly influenced by man, or to be able to develop into such a condition which guarantees preferably undisturbed natural processes in their natural dynamic. National parks aim at guaranteeing this dynamic. As far as the protection purpose allows, national parks shall also serve for a scientific environmental monitoring, environmental education

¹ LANA is a committee to advise the representatives of states and the federal government on common issues relevant to nature conservation

² Non-Governmental Organization

³ EUROPARC Deutschland (2008a): *Qualitätskriterien und -standards für deutsche Nationalparke*. Berlin.
EUROPARC Deutschland (2008b): *Quality criteria and standards for German national parks. Developing a procedure to evaluate management effectiveness*. Berlin.

⁴ International Union for Conservation of Nature

Evaluation Criteria

A total of ten relevant fields of action were defined for the national park evaluation. These fields of action were allocated a total of 44 criteria, which are described in greater detail by quality standards (see Table 1).

A standard was formulated for each criteria (see Table 2), taking into account national and international guidelines. These standards qualify as the optimal conditions to be achieved by a national park, jointly defined by the involved participants. A questionnaire with open-ended questions and indicators (EUROPARC Germany 2008 a) was used to examine actual current conditions in the national parks and to compare these with the target conditions set out in the standards. This questionnaire served as the uniform basis for all the national park evaluations.

and a nature experience for people. The German national parks are classified in IUCN⁴ category II, although they do not (yet) meet all the requirements of this category according to IUCN guidelines (the only German national park with an IUCN Category II Certificate is Kellerwald-Edersee). This is particularly the case for the minimum proportion of process protection area (core zone) of 75 %, which is not laid down in German legislation (Federal Nature Conservation Act). The Federal Nature Conservation Act and its regulations constitute a proportion of at least 50 % of the total area as a legally binding target. In some national park acts or regulations, however, the 75 % target is mentioned explicitly. Despite this, the 75 % target is included as target in the quality criteria and standards.

Table 1: The ten fields of action and the appropriate criteria

Fields of action	Criteria set	Fields of action	Criteria set
Framework conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Legal foundations – Protection purpose – Overriding planning principles – Competences – Ownership rights – Boundaries and shape 	Cooperation and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cooperation agreements – Integration in working groups and networks – Volunteer management
Protection of natural biological diversity and dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Space for natural processes – Extent – Level of naturalness – Habitats of international and national significance – Species management – Ecosystem networking 	Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Message – Corporate design (CD) – Communication structure
Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Organisational structure – Staff levels – Ranger system – Personnel management – Financing – Advisory boards and curatorship 	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Educational strategies – Education courses – Visitor guidance
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Model for landscape development – Management plan – Zoning – Renaturation – Strategies for sustainable use – Visitor guidance and area control – Integration of the national park in the region – Evaluation of measures 	Experiencing nature and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Offers for experiencing nature – Infrastructure for visitors
		Monitoring and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Research coordination – Basic research – Monitoring – Documentation
		Regional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Image – Impulses for the region – Sustainable regional development

Table 2: Quality standards for German national parks

Criteria	Standards	Criteria	Standards	Criteria	Standards	Criteria	Standards
	1. Field of action – Framework conditions		2. Field of action – Protection of natural biological diversity and dynamics		3. Field of action – Organisation		4. Field of action – Management
Legal foundations	The national park is secured under national and state law. Laws and ordinances do not obstruct the implementation of the standards for national parks.	Space for natural processes	Over most of their area, national parks protect the natural dynamics of processes of nature with as little disturbance as possible. In general, this is ensured within a period of not longer than 30 years after an area has been designated a national park and for at least 75% of the national park area. The areas for the protection of natural dynamic processes should be contiguous or uninterrupted, with few outer boundaries. National parks with more than 30% of their area not in public ownership or which in Germany completely enclose a habitat which is of global importance can define a longer transition period in the national park plan or can protect large areas of representative types of habitat in their natural processes over most of its area.	Organisational structure of the protected area administration	The national park administration is directly responsible to the highest nature conservation authority. It is an independent, efficient special authority. In particular it has the following duties: Conservation of natural processes, management, supervision of area, maintenance of recreational infrastructure for experiencing nature, contribution to education for sustainable development, monitoring and research, communication, cooperation, cooperation in regional development in the surroundings of the national park and general administration.	Model for landscape development	Every national park has its own model for landscape development. This provides a foundation, is valid over the long term, is visionary, and is compatible with the overriding vision for German national parks von EUROPARC Germany (2005). The specific vision for the national park is anchored in the management plan. The vision is directed both inwardly towards the personnel, and also outwardly.
Protection purpose	The protection purpose of national parks is primarily that natural processes should be undisturbed with their natural biodiversity in all ecosystems in the national park, for which Germany bears national and global responsibility. As far as the protection purpose allows, other goals such as education, PR work, contact with nature, research, and monitoring are also to be implemented.	Extent	A national park is extensive, taking into account the ecosystem-related criteria. It represents one or more ecosystems and ensures the process of natural dynamics. A national park must have an area of at least 10,000 hectares. As an exception, a smaller area which is internationally representational can be a national park. The area shall be so enclosed that the protection purpose is achievable within its boundaries.	Staff levels	The staffing levels ensure capable, on-going work on all the matters listed under "Organisational structure of the national park administration".	Management plan	The management plan is essential for the work of the national park administration. The goals of the national park are clearly identifiable in this. The plan contains the key fields of action, strategies and the planning for measures in order to achieve the vision and the specific goals. The plan is binding for the authorities. Management planning also specifies time-horizons and indicators to reach the individual goals. An important component of this is the determination of measures to monitor success. The management plan should be formulated not more than five years after the designation of the national park and subsequently updated at least every ten years.
Overriding planning principles	Protection purpose, planning and management of the national parks as well as surrounding protected areas are integrated in the regional planning and other overriding basic planning provisions. In the federal state and regional planning programmes, the entire national park areas are classed as a "priority area for nature conservation". The national park plan is also coupled with similar commitments in the federal state planning. In addition, concerns of the national parks are taken into consideration in the overriding planning. In the case of planning and projects in the vicinity of a national park, its interests are taken into consideration.	Level of naturalness	National parks have over the larger part of their area ecosystems which have a high level of naturalness. These ecosystems have the natural species composition and diversity which is typical for the location.	Ranger system	Full-time personnel shall be provided by the national park administration, generally on permanent contracts, for the supervision of visitors and the monitoring of the compliance with the protection regulations. For the supervision work, the administration integrates a network of volunteers, honorary personnel and fulltime staff of non governmental associations. The number of people needed for visitor guidance and supervision of the compliance with the protection regulations depends on the nature and size of the national park, the numbers of visitors, the tasks involved, and the potential risks and disturbances. The national park administration coordinates a uniform presentation and ensures a uniform level of information. The supervisors are well trained and receive regular further training. They are qualified as a certified nature and landscape carer, or have equivalent training.	Zoning	Zoning – where necessary – serves to structure the national parks in areas in which process protection has already been realised and areas in which management measures are being carried out temporarily or in the long-term. The process protection zone should be as contiguous and extensive as possible.
Competences	The national park administration has all the official authorisation needed for the realisation of the protection purpose. Where other bodies have additional responsibilities in the national park, these take into account the goals and the concerns of the national park in their decision-making in agreement with the national park administration.	Habitats of international and national significance	The national park contains habitats of international and/or national significance. These are shown in the management plan, which also includes definitions of the measures necessary to secure them that are permissible in terms of the space needed for natural processes.	Personnel management	The personnel management is carried out professionally by the national park administration. The objective is to achieve high levels of motivation and satisfaction of the personnel and high levels of efficiency. Staff work independently, they are involved in decisionmaking processes, receive regular further training and share in the internal flow of information. The national park administration has a clear voice in the selection of its personnel.	Renaturation	Renaturation measures in the national parks are limited to restoration or initial measures solely in those areas in which anthropogenic changes prior to the establishment of the national park have been such that it is not reasonable to expect natural self-regulation even in the long term. Renaturation measures are determined for a limited period in the national park plan. They serve to optimise the ecosystem quality of the national park.
Ownership rights	The area of a national park should if possible be completely owned by the public hand. Where this is not the case, then permanent provision shall be made in order to secure the realisation of the goals of the national park.	Species management	Generally, species management is an exceptional situation in national parks. The necessary measures for this are presented in the management plan.	Financing	The full financing of the national park is provided by the federal state in each case. The financing covers at least the protection of natural processes, management, supervision of area, maintenance of recreational infrastructure for experiencing nature, contribution to education for sustainable development, monitoring and research, communication, cooperation in the regional development in the national park surroundings as well as general administration. Support by third parties for the goals of the national parks is desirable.	Strategies for sustainable use	National parks are not aimed at the commercial utilisation of resources. Where such usage occurs in the national park it should not contradict the protection purpose and should only take place on a smaller part of the area of the national park. Utilisation which does not satisfy this condition is to be terminated as soon as possible.
Boundaries and shape	The outer boundaries of the national park shall be in accordance with the natural features. It encloses all sub-sections/elements of the ecosystem complex which is to be protected in an area which as far as possible is large, compact, and contiguous. The areas already have a high degree of closeness to naturalness or are suited to reach this within an acceptable period. They are virtually free of human settlements and transport infrastructure. The boundaries of the national park coincide with parcel boundaries in the land register or are specified in official sea charts.	Ecosystem networking	The national park is connected by ecologically effective corridors with the important areas for habitats and species protection in its surroundings.	Advisory boards and curatorships	Advisory boards, boards of trustees and other advisory bodies promote the development of the national park and support the integration of the national parks in the region.	Visitor guidance and area control	Visitor guidance takes place on the basis of a zoning strategy which forms part of the management plan. On the basis of the knowledge of nature conservation experts and experience with nature recreation, routes and areas are selected for the visitors and appropriately designated. In the national park, paths are signposted and where necessary no access areas are determined. The ranger service guides, informs and supervises.

Table 2: Quality standards for German national parks

Criteria	Standards	Criteria	Standards	Criteria	Standards	Criteria	Standards
	4. Field of action – Management		6. Field of action – Communication		8. Field of action – Experiencing nature and recreation		10. Field of action – Regional development
Integration of the national parks in the region	The national park region is defined. The management plan contains recommendations for the national park region. The national park administration contributes to the planning for surrounding areas.	Message	The messages of all communication activities promote the unique selling point of the national park and strengthen its product and image position. The messages are targeted towards selected groups, have a depth of content and also reach the emotions.	Offers for experiencing nature	Encouraging people to experience nature is one of the most important tasks of a national park. The methods adopted will depend on the characteristics of the park itself. It will include offers for groups, individuals and for seasonal activities. In addition, the national park administration works together with cultural institutions in the region. Where it is appropriate and compatible with the protection purpose it combines cultural and natural experiences.	Image	The national park is the most important image factor in its region. Survey are conducted regularly to determine the status of its image among the residents and visitors, as a way of monitoring the success of the park's own communications strategy.
Evaluation of the measures	The necessity for the measures carried out in the fields of visitor guidance and supervision, educational work, nature conservation, species protection, and renaturation as well as volunteer management is examined at regular intervals and their success evaluated. The results are disseminated. The findings from the evaluation flow into the management process and where appropriate lead to alterations of the strategies and their implementation.	Corporate design (CD)	The corporate design (CD) and the corporate identity (CI) provide a uniform image, based on the specifications in a CD Manual, with which the protected area administrations can present their national park in all their communications as belonging to the "Nationale Naturlandschaften".	Infrastructure for visitors	An infrastructure for visitors exists in the national park. This is appropriate for the natural area and the protection purpose and is also attractive and visitor-oriented, while at the same time being in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. The signposting in the park is uniform and easily recognisable.	Impulses for the Region	The positive effects of the national park for the region are regularly measured, documented, communicated outwards, and developed further.
	5. Field of action – Cooperation agreements and partners	Communication structure	The national park administrations communicate with the relevant target groups at regional and national levels. In addition to regularly collecting up-to-date information, the direct dialogue with the target groups is also very important. This offers the opportunity to inform about the role of the national parks, their specific tasks and special activities and at the same time to invite them to participate in joint activities. A communications structure is institutionalised to provide continuous contacts to partners, superior authorities and regional bodies such as advisory boards and board of trustees, special purpose associations, nature conservation societies and tourism associations.		9. Field of action – Monitoring and research	Impulses for sustainable regional development	The national park administration provides impulses for sustainable regional development. In particular it contributes to the formulation of a sustainable mobility strategy for the region. The strategy provides the basis for traffic guidance measures and traffic calming as well as for the deployment of environmentally-friendly means of transport in the region in general and in the park itself, in order to make the park accessible and enjoyable. In addition, the national park administration cooperates locally in the development of sustainable tourism.
Cooperation agreements	The national park administration uses cooperation agreements and partnerships in order to gain the support of as many relevant social groups as possible for the shaping of the national park and its surroundings. The participants in the cooperation agreements and the partners acknowledge the goals of the national park and support them. The basis for the cooperation is the presentation of a strategy document by the national park administration concerning the general handling of the cooperation.		7. Field of action – Education	Research coordination	Research is directed towards questions which are relevant for national parks. The research strategy of the national park forms a part of the management plan. The national park administration assesses whether research projects proposed by third parties are compatible with the protection purpose, and also coordinates research projects.		
Integration in working groups and networks	The national park is integrated in many ways with its surroundings. It contributes significantly to the image of the region. The national park administration is actively represented in all relevant working groups and networks.	Educational strategies	Existing educational strategies for specific target groups are implemented as part of the work relating to national parks. It is essential that the educational plans are regularly up-dated and that the personnel are provided with further training. Educational courses are coordinated by the national park administration, and periodically evaluated.	Basic research	The national park administration collects information about the features of the park over the whole of its area in the context of the landscape history and the history of its use, and this can provide the basis for the national park plan. The determination of the fundamentals can be carried over into a monitoring process.		
Volunteer management	National parks understand that the cooperation with volunteers is an enrichment of their activities and helps to establish the protected area in the region. It offers opportunities for people of all ages, with various qualifications, abilities and interests. The volunteer management programme includes professional supervision, the integration of volunteers in the team with full-time personnel as well as recognition of volunteers.	Education courses	The educational contributions provide information about the goals and duties of the national park and what can be found in them, with the main focus being placed on the central message of the national park. The national park makes a contribution towards education for sustainable development. In the educational work, the idea of the national park is linked to the global task – the conservation of natural basis of life for this and future generations.	Monitoring	Monitoring is carried out in the national park to an adequate extent and in accordance with uniform standards, and is oriented to the goals and the protection purpose of the national park. Among other things it also serves to check progress.		
		Visitor guidance	For visitor guidance, the operating strategies adopted for the work of rangers, for education, and for other visitor supervision are coordinated with one another. The individuals involved know the approaches of the others who are contributing. The general guidance of visitors takes place in the information centre and at the individual information points. The personnel working there explain the general and specific duties and goals of the national park and transmit identification with the national park.	Documentation	The information collected in the general surveys, monitoring and project research is evaluated in accordance with scientific criteria, worked up, documented and shall be made accessible in a suitable form.		

The evaluation process – strengths, weaknesses and possibilities for improvement

This was the first time that such a process had been carried out in German national parks. Therefore, despite the generally very positive feedback for the evaluated national parks from the relevant national ministries and the committee, it is no surprise that further improvements of the processes are possible.

One positive aspect is that the national park administrations already used the completing of the questionnaires to systematically deal with issues that had not been the focus of their attention until then. This already led to a critical self-analysis at the beginning of the process. In return, the national park administrations also provided a lot of improvement suggestions for the questionnaire itself.

The findings resulting from the questionnaire and the agency report were complemented by the impressions and discussions on the excursions. Due to its multidisciplinary composition, the evaluation committee could contribute with comprehensive expertise and identify issues from their outsider's view that were less visible from the inner perspective of the national park administrations. Thus, a more objective image could be gained of where the parks stand in the particular fields of activity, whether targets have been reached, what the management quality is and whether resources are used appropriately. "Blind spots" within park management could be highlighted. Both the evaluation discussions on site, at which members of the responsible national ministry always took part, as well as the reports of the committee have already led to positive changes in some national parks; this is because as well as deficits, detailed suggestions for measures to improve the situation were also included. In this context, the discussions of the committee with regional stakeholders (e. g. associations, NGOs and user groups) proved to be particularly useful as they revealed views and assessments which often went beyond the ones of the national park administrations. However, the time scheduled for these discussions frequently turned out to be too short to be able to look in detail at all the issues mentioned. The excursions to selected sites of the national park were equally essential for the committee.

More time would have been desirable from the committee member's point of view in order to better mutually prepare for the evaluations. Moreover, there were no fixed evaluation teams separated from the purpose of the task; the committee members mainly had to fulfil this task in addition to their other



Committee members on the side visit to Berchtesgaden National Park

occupational activities. Therefore, differences in the depth of information in the committee reports could not always been avoided. The requirement to further specify certain criteria was also mentioned.

For the future, it remains to be seen what effect the committee reports have on the stakeholders addressed, particularly concerning their measure suggestions, and to what extent this will lead to a permanent improvement of management quality in the national parks.

Selected results

Throughout the time that this brochure was being developed (May 2012), the committee reports for eight out of fourteen evaluated national parks were available. Hence the following information mainly refers to those particular parks and here only to selected fields of action.

For almost all national parks evaluated so far it can be stated that their acceptance in the regional surroundings has considerably increased since their designation and that they are not questioned anymore. This does not exclude dissatisfaction or conflicts in individual cases, but overall the highly emotional discussion about many German national parks (particularly in the 1980s and 1990s) has significantly calmed down. This is not least due to national park administrations and responsible ministries having recognised the importance of intense communication and cooperation, carrying out and promoting them actively, trying to involve the parties concerned in decision processes and considering their interests as far as possible.

With regard to some of the selected fields of action, obstacles to national park development have been detected in, for example, the present framework conditions under which the national park administrations work (field of action 1 "framework conditions"). All national parks are secured by law or regulation which, in addition, stipulates the undisturbed flow of natural processes as a priority goal. In several national parks, however, other legal provisions (as well as exception and special rules for other utilisations) prevent comprehensive realisation of the natural dynamics concept. The interests of national parks are often not sufficiently considered in planning projects by third parties. In addition, only a few national park administrations possess all the authority responsibilities required to implement the protection purpose. In several national parks, cooperation with other authorities is problematic, since they consider the national park interests only partially or in a delayed way.

For field of action 2 "protection of natural biological diversity and dynamics", it has to be stated positively that the IUCN demand that 75 % of the total area should serve for process protection is included in the regulations of most of the German national parks. However, this value has actually only been reached in a few national parks so far (criterion 2.1 space for natural processes). On the contrary, almost all national parks have the minimum size of 10,000 ha (criterion 2.2 extent). Frequently

the protection effect is increased by adjacent or surrounding protected areas so that good ecosystem networking (criteria 2.6) with the surroundings is also often achieved. However, the protection of biodiversity, as well as enabling natural processes, depends not only on the size of the national park and their core zones but also on other factors. The shape of the national park area, influences from the surroundings, continuing utilisation and fragmentation effects often have negative consequences. On the contrary, it should be positively noted that habitats of international and national significance (criterion 2.4) are protected in all national parks. Nevertheless, non-natural vegetation types still exist in large areas of many parks, in particular formerly intensively used spruce or pine stands that are poor in species and structures in the forest national parks (criterion 2.3 level of naturalness). This can create serious problems for national park administrations by giving them the choice between either interfering in natural processes through forest conversion measures over at least a certain period of time, or accepting non-natural habitats over possibly longer periods of time by not interfering. A similarly difficult task is the management of often excessively high hoofed game populations (roe deer, fallow deer, red deer, wild boar, mouflon) due to the lack of natural predators (such as lynx, wolf and bear); this can lead to unnaturally high bark stripping or browsing damage to trees and thus make natural regeneration difficult or impossible. In this context, different wildlife management strategies can be found in the national parks, giving different answers to the question "Which nature do we want to protect?" The marine and coastal national parks both face similarly difficult challenges e. g. in dealing with the consequences of sea level rise, the irreversible arrival of invasive alien species and the impact of fishery.

In these fields of action the evaluation of the German national parks can be the catalyst for more intense discussion across parks. For example, in the course of the evaluation process, EUROPARC Germany organised a nationwide workshop on wildlife management in order to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the different approaches and develop a common strategy.

Conclusion and prospects



Committee members during the site visit at Saxon Switzerland National Park

Overall, the first evaluation of German national parks - which was voluntary - has been a success and is giving impetus for the further development of those areas. However, in addition to the many strengths of the evaluation process, smaller weaknesses also became obvious; these could not have been avoided by the initial implementation of such a complex process. It is possible to include the experiences in future evaluations through an internal documentation of the process and its intensive discussion. The evaluation of all national parks proved to be extensive and required a period of three years. Thus it seems appropriate to aim for follow-up evaluations on, approximately, a ten-year-cycle.

It can already be seen that the procedure described to evaluate the management of national parks significantly contributes to further improve management effectiveness of protected areas in the German national parks and thus to effective implementation of the decisions of the 7th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity (COP 7 CBD).

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