



WILD EUROPE

OUTLINE SPECIFICATION

A EUROPEAN WILDERNESS REGISTER

DRAFT PROJECT 2 Version 6 01/01/10

Please note the following draft is intended to get the ball rolling on this project. It is anticipated that there will be requirement for amendment.

It is felt important that the Register is seen to be comprehensively evaluated with a substantive information base. However, applications for registration and subsequent development of protection plans would be 'fast tracked' to ensure rapid incorporation of threatened areas.

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OUTLINE SPECIFICATION A EUROPEAN WILDERNESS REGISTER

1. Background

The European Parliament voted on 2nd February 2009 by 538 to 19 in favour of adopting a Report calling for improved protection and funding of wilderness, in particular focusing on the need for definition and mapping of relevant areas to enable development of plans for addressing threats.

This proposal was echoed in a recommendation for urgent establishment of a European Wilderness Register from participants in the European Commission Presidency Conference on “Wilderness and Large Natural Habitat Areas in Europe”, 27-28 May 2009 in Prague. See Recommendation C13 in the “Message from Prague”:

Compilation of a Register of Wilderness using existing databases, such as the EEA and WDPA, identifying in tandem with appropriate interested parties the remaining areas of wilderness and wildlands, the threats and opportunities related to these, and their economic values, with practical recommendations for action.

Many areas of wilderness or wild land are under threat from inappropriately located logging, infrastructure development, over-grazing and other farming impacts, mining and climate change.

There is also growing awareness of the sometimes inappropriate impact of active conservation management in such areas that is focused on individual species or habitat types, or a specific stage in ecosystem succession.

Before effective plans can be drafted for their protection, it is important to have accurate and updated information on the precise location of these areas, together with all their relevant characteristics.

Most wilderness areas are located in Northern Fennoscandia, Western Russia and Ukraine. There are also elements in Central and Southern Europe. A large proportion of wilderness is already classified as IUCN Category Ia and Ib areas. Other pieces so far remain unidentified within Category II and probably other category areas.

Equally, many important wild areas - generally smaller, more fragmented or modified - have yet to be formally catalogued.

Minimum size and naturalness of process applicable to attain a ‘wilderness’ label is open to subjective opinion, and a clear set of measurable criteria is needed to define status, on a standardized basis to permit ready comparison between areas.

It is considered that some areas currently categorized as wilderness may not in

effect currently meet appropriate criteria in this respect (see part 3).

2. Purpose of the Wilderness Register

The Register, which would include wilderness and key wild area sites, could fulfill a number of aims:

1. Record location and other information as the basis for formulating and implementing protection plans
2. Provide de facto recognition for such areas, enabling urgency and authority to be lent to their protection
3. Identify key interested parties whose participation is essential to development of sustainable protection
4. Link managers and other interested parties from the relevant areas, enabling the sharing of best practice - including guidance on non intervention and restoration management - and, where relevant, adoption of a coordinated approach to protection aspects
5. Give precision to IUCN defined areas, including measurable criteria to help planning for protection and restoration
6. Establish a baseline which enables monitoring of changes in condition to the areas
7. Contribute towards establishing clear information on the scale, location and other detail of wilderness and major wild areas

3. Establishing a 'baseline' for standardized assessment

In order to categorise and log individual sites, a consensus is needed on the practical 'baseline' against which the degree and quality of 'wildness' can be judged and prioritized. As a starting point it is proposed that a version of the IUCN Category 1b be used, adapted to European circumstances and applied to specific habitat types:

A large area of unmodified or slightly modified land, and/or sea, retaining its natural character and influence, without permanent or significant habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural condition.

This in turn will require measurements of 'wildness' criteria as existing on the ground. These can either be specified in further detail initially, or developed through feedback on specific areas subsequently received.

Criteria would thus include:

- Minimum size
- Minimal if any modification of natural habitat or key ecological processes
- No human habitation
- Minimal if any signs of human impact, with residue capable of removal
- No intrusive or extractive activity

Where these criteria do not apply in the right combination to constitute wilderness, appropriate areas could still merit protection, but perhaps be classed as 'wild' not

‘wilderness’.

Where inclusion of some of the above criteria is precluded by current law, allowing activity by indigenous population as in Finland, this needs to be identified and the issue ring fenced to avoid dilution of standards in other areas.

4. Content of the Register

This will be determined by the consensus of feedback received from appropriate authorities, including grassroots and specialist expertise.

The following specific aspects are proffered initially for inclusion. In practice the section on threats and addressing them via opportunities will be the key element in the Register:

4.1 Background information

This is intended for input to the Register, and should be sufficient to inform practical protection plans. If any information is not readily to hand or would take time and expense to obtain, applications for registration should note this – but not be held up. The emphasis is on practical protection.

Physical and ecological characteristics

- Precise location, using GPS coordinates and correlated with aerial and ground photographs and maps to an agreed scale for strategic and operational purposes. Clear indication of all boundaries
- Size, including relevant categorization by habitat type, existing designation, and zonation (core, buffer, transition) where relevant
- Information on the main physical features including landscape, geomorphology, hydrology, soil, vegetation types – with emphasis on identification of ‘core’ areas for example of old growth forest
- Degree of isolation or linkage to external ‘ecological networks’ of importance to the area; the extent of ‘self-containment’ – eg watercourses originating within or outside the area, impact of external air pollution etc
- The status of key ecological processes: non biological (seasonal flooding, drought, natural fires) and biological, include impact of herbivores. Integrity of internal ecosystems, including information on any damage, alteration or other impact on natural habitats and processes.
- Main species present - IUCN classification, Biodiversity Action Plan (if any), sustainability of populations, including estimates of population sizes and linkages outside the area if known

Anthropogenic aspects

- Human infrastructure and impacts; any comments (subjective/objective) on quality and degree of wilderness or wildness

- Indication of land use and other relevant aspects of adjacent areas
- Ownership type: state, private, community. Landholding pattern: size & distribution of holdings, land uses (if any)

Effectiveness of existing protection

- Protection status of land and species: specify legal instrument – National Park, Natura 2000, etc. Indicate relevant documents, authority – with comment on adequacy of existing provision, identifying shortfalls.
- Appropriateness of existing conservation plans including objectives and targets for land and species protection – including issues of small size and fragmentation
- Comment, if feasible, on level of support for this status from local communities, landholders and other interested parties; what they gain/lose from current protected status and what benefits they derive (eg tourism)
- Protective management: agency/NGO involved (their own wilderness principles), relevant activities, comments on adequacy of capacity and other aspects. Contacts details to be provided where possible
- Overview of other conservation initiatives presently operating in the area – including agency/NGO involved. Comments on strengths and requirements for improvement
- Other parties relevant to the area whose support is needed for effective protection - protection agency/NGO, land ownership, land use, political structures, communities, activities etc
- Quality and range of externally oriented communication materials and IT, for target audiences and general public.

4.2 Threats and Opportunities

Threats

- Evaluation of level and imminence of threats, including source. Threats to land (specify): forestry, renewable energy production, infrastructure, general development, privatisation and restitution of land. Threats to species (specify): hunting, habitat disturbance or removal, pollution, other.
- Activities in neighbouring areas and their impact (if any). Extractive: forestry, farming, mining, other. Non-extractive: nature tourism, recreation, sporting (include seasonal or spatial restrictions).

Opportunities

- Identification of any relevant opportunities for improved protection (specify): legal (local, national, EU or other level), policy (ditto all levels), monitoring, enforcement, land acquisition or management agreement, extending core zone, create buffer and transition zones, internal and external land linkages; logging concession cancellation or purchase; habitat and process restoration requirements specifying proposals for methods used (including whether

natural or initially management led), appropriate incentive mechanisms, local public relations, education, alternative livelihood development, national representation – including delayed and conditional privatization and restitution, organizational capacity, training, specialist expertise, leadership, funding.

- Identification of the main existing or prospective environmental, social and economic benefits relevant to these areas. Which of these are currently of worth to local interested parties – eg local communities and/or landholders benefiting from nature tourism. Suggest further opportunity – re above section on opportunities for improved protection
- Key parties responsible for implementing any new protective plans and those whose support is required for their success – noting if different from those mentioned above – eg creating new organization or engaging wider support.

5. Key aspects of the Register

In order to be an effective working document, development of the Register should incorporate the following aspects:

- Europe wide scope to Ural Mountains and including Caucasus
- Prioritization of areas listed, by importance and level of threat
- Interactive map function, with ability to access different scales
- A clearly sequenced index with search function to enable ready access
- Text professional, and also readable by all parties, including non specialists
- High standards of accuracy for all elements of content, to pre-agreed criteria
- Pre agreed scales at national & local levels for mapping & other detail provided
- A structure for the Register designed to enable easy update and expansion
- Data providers identified, with sources, for verification
- Low cost to update, expand and reproduce content
- Availability in electronic and hard copy form

6. Procedure for entry into Register

Although the registration process would be voluntary it is important that all relevant areas needing protection are covered.

It is suggested that relevant government ministries, agencies, NGOs and other parties be requested to nominate particular areas for inclusion, clarifying upfront that this would occur on a priority basis according to urgency of threat and quality of area – it would not be automatic. Appropriate bodies could be targeted in the first instance to support this prioritization process.

A specification of required information together with a structured form for reply should be sent to all parties.

Identification of appropriate areas, together with collation of information on their characteristics, should be undertaken with fully participation of key interested parties – with involvement of those in the locality and region whose engagement and support will be important to future monitoring and maintenance of protection.

An appropriate verification procedure should be devised for ensuring and checking the input of information and subsequent updates, via appointment of a Registrar.

Gaps in feedback, applying to entire areas or missing elements within individual areas, should be identified and matched to relevant contacts.

Information on wild areas not considered of sufficient status (yet) for inclusion on the Register could be separately recorded.

Fast tracking

It is important for the credibility of the Register that it is compiled with a substantive database of information for each area, not least because it has become clear that just the registration of an area may bring recognition and thus have some protective influence.

However, in order to ensure rapid action where threats are particularly urgent, there would be a 'fast track' mechanism for applications that enables usage of detail immediately available to ensure accurate assessment and decision on qualification for entry to the Register, but permits subsequent follow up with the remainder of the data requested that might take longer to compile.

7. Information sourcing for the Wilderness Register

Much information already exists on the relevant areas, compiled by EEA, Altera, ECNC, BLI and others. So long as this can be appropriately verified, and incorporated on a standardized basis, it is important to avoid overlap.

The Wilderness Register could have a stand-alone structure or be integrated into the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA), accessed via an advanced search tool. WDPA is a foundation dataset for practical conservation planning, containing information from governments, NGOs, academic institutions, biodiversity conventions and other sources.

8. Monitoring of Registered areas

A plan for monitoring should be developed in tandem with development of the Register, specifying allocation of responsibilities, frequency and type of surveillance, mode of recording for data, procedure for notifying changes in condition and funding sources to enable this.

A combination of ground assessment and remote sensing would be ideal, and various options should be considered, including use the European Space Agency facility.

9. Procedure for update of entries in the Register

The following aspects will need to be agreed:

- Which parties will be responsible for providing inputs and updates
- On what basis – where relevant – they are to be remunerated
- The format for data delivery
- An appropriate verification procedures for checking, via a Registrar
- Frequency of update – on an ad hoc basis with a periodic formal review pattern
- A plan for development of the Register, with responsible parties, timescale for

actions, budget and funding sources agreed

10. Linkages with other initiatives

In addition to its role in compilation of individual area Action Plans, feedback from compilation of the Register should also be used to assess and inform options for policy and funding reforms by EU and other parties.

Linkages are appropriate to the following initiatives, many of which are proposed in the Message from Prague:

- Anticipated development by the EC of guidance to Member States for improved protection, linked to feedback from the current Wilderness Resolution
- An Early Warning System proposed for identification and rapid address of new threats to individual wild areas
- Current development (by others) of a Register of Wilderness and Wild Area Law
- Development of proposed reforms to the 2012 Common Agricultural Policy review in support of a wild area protection and restoration agenda - with potential for coordinated proactive planning and representation.
- Assessment of other EU funding and legislative instruments, how these might be better used or amended
- Assessment of the potential for improving capacity of local communities and landholders to benefit from nature tourism, where consistent with wild land protection
- Review of opportunities for ensuring, through incentives, promotion and other means, the use of wild land benefits from the climate change agenda: carbon sequestration, flood mitigation, pollution alleviation
- Review of opportunities for ensuring, through incentives, promotion and other means, the gaining of value from social benefits (reference healthcare, youth development, youth at risk, conflict resolution initiatives – linked to proactive development of new markets eg in the Probationary and Health services.) and cultural benefits
- Review practical options for better linkage between EU departments (eg environment, transport, energy, to ensure better coordination in protection strategy
- Mapping and review of opportunities for restoration, enlargement and linkage of wild areas
- Usage of cost-benefit analysis and valuation instruments as an element in promoting protection and restoration initiatives
- Liaison with other sector interests: landholding, forestry, agriculture, business, urban social

Appendices

Development of the Register could enable promotion of protection plans, tailored and prioritised to the needs of individual areas according to the nature and urgency of the threat and opportunities for addressing it.

A) Development of Individual Protection Plans

Information from the Wilderness Register could be used for development of individual protection plans tailored to specific areas.

These plans would be intended to provide an initial overview. They should be based on consultation with relevant institutions – but are intended to form the basis for a more detailed approach subsequently, within a given timescale.

Any plans should be prioritized according to imminence of threat and quality of area.

They must be seen to be proposed, compiled, implemented and monitored by and with relevant interested parties at local as well as national level, to secure necessary engagement among those whose support will be needed for successful protection.

To prepare outline plans for more effective protection - both internationally, nationally and at area level – as with compilation of the Register itself, the following aspects are relevant:

- Assessment of the status of habitats, processes and species
- Specification of threats applying to these
- Review of adequacy of existing protection
- Addressing opportunities for key solutions needed: legal, funding, capacity building, land management and monitoring etc
- Identification where relevant of a role for a benefits-based valuation approach in any such solutions. This could include the main existing or prospective environmental, social and economic benefits relevant to these areas, taking account of the need for valuation and translation of these into specific initiatives where relevant
- Developing proposed Action Plans with targets and timescales for each area
- Identification of sources for funding and expertise
- Listing of relevant parties and initiatives that need to be involved, with indication of roles and appropriate contact information, eg:
 - Conservation
 - Tourism and events business
 - Local authority
 - Sector bodies
 - National government
 - Political parties
 - Local communities
 - Other

Comment on the existing degree of engagement by these parties and how this can be improved, including more effective representation of the value of wilderness.

Protection plans should build on existing plans wherever possible, and avoid duplication. Equally, assessment of best practice in protection and management should where feasible be signposted to existing initiatives, rather than starting at first base.

Where they require actions beyond local level to ensure effective protection - eg engaging regional, national or international involvement - these should be indicated together with relevant bodies and contacts. See section below

Integrated solutions should be proposed – in line with existing initiatives and objectives – for example Action Plans related to the EC Communication May 2006 “Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010”.

B) Development of overall protection plans

In addition to individual area plans, there should also be an overall collation of information as part of a general strategy for reform.

Collation of data from all individual areas should be used to inform conclusions about requirements for national or international measures where this lies beyond the scope of individual protection plans – involving for example the following categories (not intended to be exhaustive):

Legislation

- Strengthen or clarify existing EU legislation
- Assess the need for new legislation (with careful realism: this should not be seen to compromise the N2000 programme)
- Identify appropriate opportunities in non EU states
- Consider wider use of tailored wilderness legislation

Policy Support

- Adequacy of existing policy and incentive support – from EU, government and NGOs
- Linkage with EU sector plans: agriculture, forestry, regional, transport, energy

Land Management

- Best practice in protective and restoration management of habitats and species in a wild area context
- Best practice in wild area benefit identification and usage
- Resolution of wilderness vs biodiversity conflict – both generally and for management practice in the N2000 programme (where relevant)

Land Acquisition

- Land acquisition, long-term management agreements
- New and enhanced instruments for enabling this: econometric valuation methods, incentives, lobbying approaches

Capacity Building

- Sources of funding and advice for strengthening local conservation organizations including training, development, marketing, fund-raising, lobbying techniques, media use, collective action

Promoting the Value of Wilderness

- Political representation and awareness raising
- Importance of the benefit-based approach: identifying and valuing the benefits of wilderness
- Proposing integrated alliance-based approaches for political representation of these benefits
- Broader engagement of existing and new sectors where relevant – including tourism, business, carbon trading, water and electrical utilities, insurance companies, urban social enterprise and media.

Funding Sources

- Assessing new and improved funding and incentives – including provision such as payment for environmental services (carbon sequestration, flood mitigation), CAP reformulation, GEF instruments, corporate sponsorship etc

This overall collation should provide recommendations on specific reforms - particularly to legal, policy and funding support - required to provide appropriate levels of protection or restoration: at EU, national and local level, and in a non EU European context.

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01/01/2010

Reference:

Definitions of Wilderness and Large Natural Habitat Areas

Toby Aykroyd and Wolfgang Schroeder, preparatory document for Prague conference. Please note this includes extensive input from others, including a workshop in Prague in Spring 2009.