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# **The Protection Programme for Sumava National Park**

- **Representation of ecological value**
- **Assessment of economic benefit**
- **A plan for enterprise opportunity**

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# The Protection Programme for Sumava National Park

## Background

The Sumava programme was initiated 12 years ago, but there is significant opportunity for building on its success. Furthermore, the advocacy, economic and enterprise elements it uses are widely applicable elsewhere.

In 2011 Sumava National Park was threatened with extensive logging, extended development zones and plans for a large ski lift. Two Bills were presented to the Prague parliament to enable this, supported by the Ministry of Environment and a local community.

The implications were substantial. Not only was a valuable element of Czech natural heritage endangered, but if this legally designated area of international conservation importance was to be effectively dis-established it would have represented a serious precedent for protected areas generally.

Wild Europe was invited by local NGOs, led by Hnutí DUHA (Czech Friends of the Earth), CzechGlobe a renowned institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and others, to help as part of their ongoing initiatives to address this issue.

We developed a programme with three main components:

- Representation of ecological value
- Assessment of economic benefit
- A plan for enterprise opportunity

## 1. Representation of ecological value

In 2012 Wild Europe coordinated a petition<sup>1</sup> signed at director level by 72 organizations.

- The immediate aim was to express a consensus of international opinion in the conservation world about the ecological value of Sumava NP, and concern about its future.

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<sup>1</sup> Petition available on request

- Objectives suggested in the petition involved protection and extension of the non-intervention wilderness as proposed in the National Park management plan.
- Some 400 individual representations with the petition were made by Wild Europe to all MPs and ministers in the Czech Parliament during 2012/13. Positive responses were received from the Prime Minister, Environment Minister, Agriculture Minister, and heads of the Environment, Economic Affairs and Education & Science Committees in the Czech Parliament among many others.
- We coordinated closely throughout with Czech NGOs and IUCN, who had made their own representations, and with Wild Europe's partners.

## 2. Assessment of economic benefit

The conservation campaign to save Sumava evidently lacked an economic standpoint against the influential income and employment arguments from those advocating logging and development.

From 2012 Wild Europe thus scoped and helped to manage an independent Study by FTEC Consultants<sup>2</sup> in association with CzechGlobe who also provided funding, on ***The Economic Impact of Management Options for Sumava NP***. Three future options for the NP were posited:

- 1) If the existing status of the NP was maintained
- 2) If the pro-development Parliamentary Bills were implemented
- 3) If the non-intervention area was extended and new tourism and other 'no impact' enterprises thus enabled

The conclusions of the Study pointed in favour of option 3) and suggested the ski lift project might well be financially unviable [the project has since been withdrawn].

In February 2014 the Study was published at a **national press conference and media launch**, and the results conveyed to politicians. Feedback suggested it had a strong and credible influence.

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<sup>2</sup> Study available on request

Wild Europe also drafted a **plan for promoting global support at the IUCN Conference** in Sidney.

This followed our obtaining the signed support of Ernesto Enkerlin Hoeflich, then Chairman of WCPA/IUCN, for a **separate Resolution** on Sumava.

## **Further representation in Czech Republic**

In October 2014 Wild Europe organized two sessions at the **Forum 2000 event**<sup>3</sup> in Prague.

The first was Chaired by Professor Moldan Bedrich, former Environment Minister and author of Czech conservation strategy following the Velvet Revolution. It showcased the biodiversity and socio-economic benefits from large scale non-intervention areas, and presented a consensus on their value.

A video to open the event was produced for Wild Europe by His Royal Highness Prince Charles<sup>4</sup>, and the Secretary General of the European Landowners Organization spoke alongside leading conservationists. Senior personnel from the Environment Ministry participated.

In November 2014 the Czech Parliament voted against adoption of the logging and development legislation.

### **3. A plan for enterprise opportunity**

Despite the good news from the Czech parliament, concerns about the National Park and wilderness have been expressed from among many of the 22 local communities in and around Sumava.

In 2014/15 Wild Europe developed a ***Pre-Action Feasibility Study on Realising the Enterprise Benefits of Wilderness in Sumava National Park***<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Forum Agenda available on request

<sup>4</sup> Available for individual viewings only

<sup>5</sup> Specification available on request

- This is a practical sequel to the FTEC Economic Study, aiming to implement its benefits on the ground through identification and support for business opportunities bringing income and employment for local communities.
- Overall objectives for wilderness and its principles of non-intervention and no extraction in core areas would be followed. However this enterprise-based initiative is felt to be essential in securing ongoing support from the communities and thus sustainable protection for Sumava in the future.
- Crucially, the project involves an initial 18 month canvass of views in the local communities, identifying (non-extractive) business opportunities and having best potential to promote the wilderness argument in all its aspects. Personalities well respected in their local communities are being selected for this work.
- Preliminary soundings among local entrepreneurs have proven highly promising.
- The project proposes assessment of much closer working links with the BayerischerWald National Park in neighbouring Bavaria, aiming to form a joint world class nature destination.

Two leading consultancies were approached for the project. Both are leaders in their fields of enterprise, economic and financial specialisms. Further detail is available on request.

Meetings were subsequently held with the Environment Ministry and personnel from Sumava and Bayerischer Wald National Parks.

In October 2018 Wild Europe received written confirmation from Vladimir Dolejsky, Vice Minister of Environment, affirming his Ministry's full support for our proposed enterprise project, linking with neighbouring Bayerischer Wald NP in Bavaria and stating their wish to implement it in other Czech National Parks.

Actual go-ahead with the enterprise project was suspended due to the Covid outbreak in 2020. However the Ministry support effectively marked a conclusion to the original threat facing Sumava National Park, offering a stable and positive basis for expansion of its non-intervention core areas with resulting benefits, as presaged by the FTEC Economic Report.

## **Update – July 2024**

There has since been further progress related to recommendations from the Sumava campaign, including closer cross-frontier ties with Bayerischer Wald NP.

This progress, coupled with vision provided by the targets of the EU Biodiversity and Forest Strategies, offers significant opportunity.

With the status and extent of the core non-intervention zones for Sumava NP currently under review, timing is right to implement the enterprise project. This can underwrite the value of wilderness by further proving the economic benefits of a non-intervention management regime in Sumava NP for local communities and the wider region.

Wild Europe stands ready to offer support and is discussing approaches with national NGOs and others.