



Stakeholder consultation in management of Natura 2000 – water management case study

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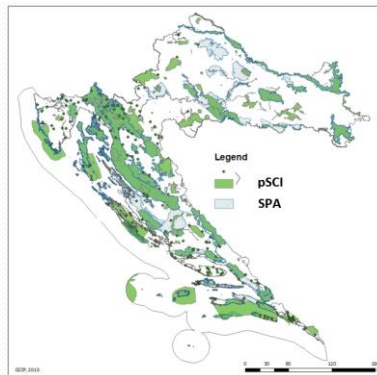
Zagreb, August 2011.



Content

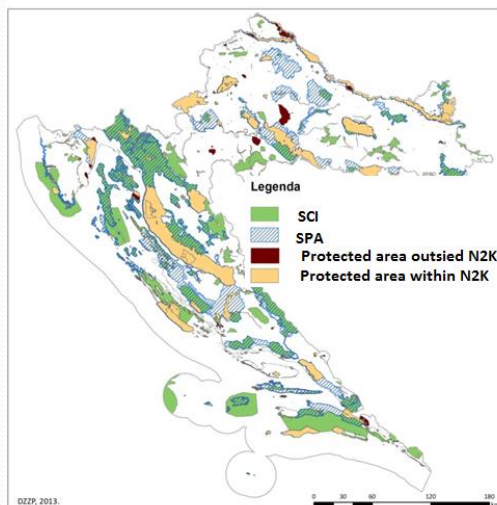
- Brief information about Natura 2000 in Croatia
- Importance of national stakeholders in management
- Experiences in regards to forestry and agriculture
- Overview of the stakeholder involvement process in water management plans as a tool for Natura 2000 management

Natura 2000 – Ecological network

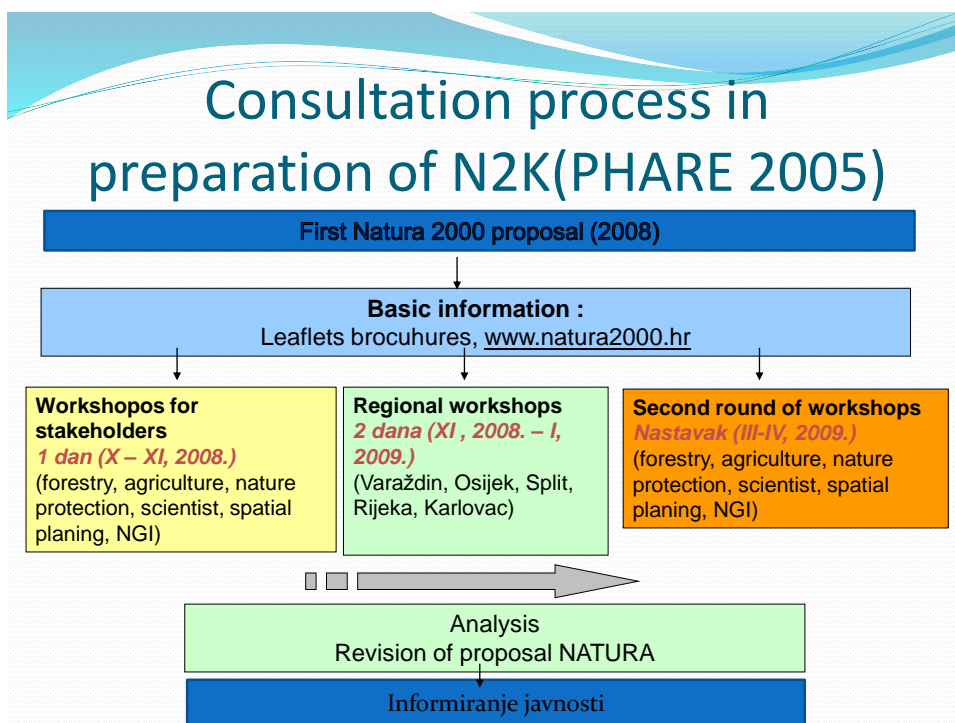
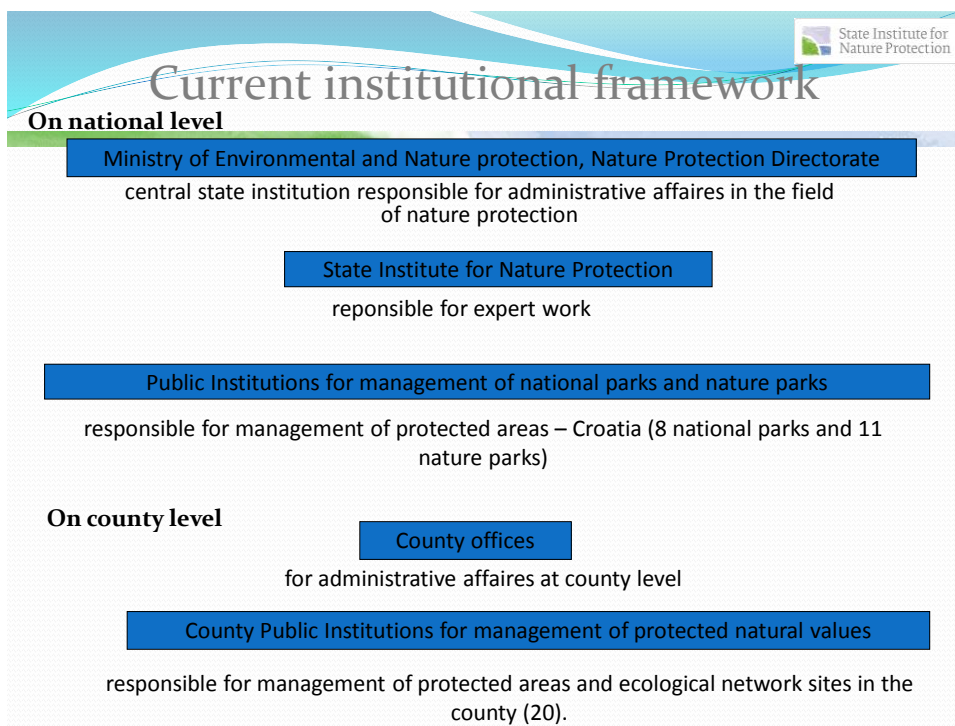


	Land area RH (km2)	% land RH	Area of coastal sea RH (km2)	% coastal sea RH	Total area RH (km2)	% total area RH	Number of Natura 2000 sites
pSCI	16059,57	28,38	4903,12	15,44	20962,69	23,73	742
SPA	17107,55	30,23	1040,13	3,28	18147,68	20,54	38
Natura 2000	20754,97	36,67	5204,63	16,39	25959,6	29,38	780

Natura 2000 and protected area



- 87 % of protected area are within Natura 2000
- 26 % of Natura 2000 is covered by protected area



Series of thematic publications

- Series of brochures with basic information about Natura 2000 and its management
- Prepared with prominent experts from specific sectors



Management of N2K in Croatia

- Management plans of natural resources in forestry, agriculture, water management
- Specific plans for Natura 2000 sites may be developed by county institutions for management of protected areas
- Management plans for nature parks and national parks serve also as management plans for Natura 2000

Terms and environmental protection measures for the natural resource management plans

- Natural resources management plans include measures and conditions of nature protection
- Natural resources management plans that include protected areas or if their implementation may have a significant impact on the conservation objectives and integrity of the ecological network require prior approval of the Ministry.
- Natural resources management plans as defined by specific laws are the basis for management planning and use of natural resources for the economic, social and environmental purpose

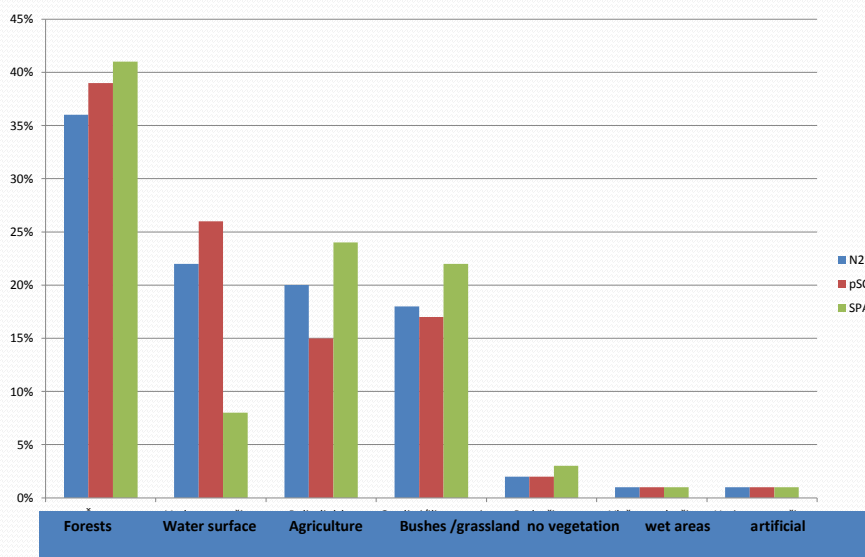
Stakeholders

- National sectors with special role in management are under Ministry of agriculture
 - Public entity responsible for water management
Croatian waters
 - Public enterprise responsible for management of forests
Croatian forests
 - Agency for payments in agriculture
- Local and legal government and municipalities
- Private owners and users

Importance of national stakeholder

- 80% of Croatian forests state owned and managed by public enterprise (process of restitution ongoing)
- Majority of Croatian rivers i.e. the largest rivers Sava Drava and Danube as well as many smaller rivers include in their whole length in Natura 2000
- Agricultural plots small with many small owners agro environmental scheme and incentives main element of management – owners need support from state agencies to access the funds

Percent of CLC classes in N2K





Forestry

- A collaboration with forest sector established in the preparation of Natura 2000 proposal
- Similar collaboration planned for preparation of forest management plans
- Joint application for EU funds
- Forest management plans would also include Natura 2000 conservation measures
- Standardized content of plans has to be adopted
- Such plans have to be prepared for private and state forests
- More elaborate stakeholder involvement for private forests



Agriculture

- The measures required by law but no planning document prescribed
- A draft program of rural development prepared.
- Agricultural activities in accordance with nature protection promoted
- Agro environmental measures through NIP agri project
- Voluntary agreements between state and farmers
- Planned are 32 regional workshops with agricultural sector



Case study water management

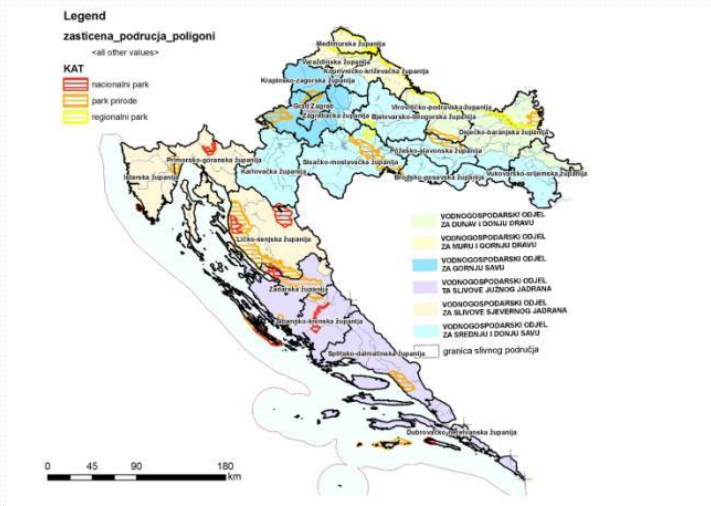
- Gradual evolvement of cooperation
- Consultation process for lower level plan serves as a basis for inclusion of nature protection measures in higher level plans
- Stakeholder with strong national responsibilities and tradition



Plans in water management

- National water management plans (2 watersheds)
- Yearly plans of river maintenance
- National plan undergoes public consultation but has a very general nature
- Yearly plans of maintenance only informal consultation of municipal bodies and regional water management offices
- **However yearly maintenance plan of is of a great importance for management of Natura 2000**

Administrative and nature conservation units



Background

- In Croatia there are about 21,000 km of streams, rivers, canals and other water bodies, many of which support valuable habitats and habitats of species.
- Some of the larger Croatian rivers, especially Danube, Sava and Drava, have been heavily constrained by flood protection dikes,
- Still, under extreme conditions, represent a serious threat to human property and even life during flood seasons which are quite frequent

Differences biogeographic regions

- While some rivers, especially their downstream stretches, are used for navigation and/or irrigation they all have importance as a part of the drainage network for discharging water.
- In the mountains and coastal areas also many intermittent streams, which are dry for the larger part of the year, play an important role in the rapid outflow of torrents during very short periods of the year

Maintenance activity

- Although non-structural flood protection measures are becoming more important during contemporary changes towards a more modern water basin management approach,
- Whole system does still require various preventive maintenance activities related to safety of flood defense dikes and structures and inundation areas,
- Maintenance of drainage capacity along smaller watercourses to ensure protection from local floods and extreme bank erosion along economically important areas and settlements



Croatian waters

- In order to plan, implement and coordinate these tasks a special state water management agency “Croatian waters” (Hrvatske vode, HV) exists, as defined by the Water Act, subordinated to the sector of agriculture.
- According to the law, HV are obliged to prepare and implement an annual national “Programme for maintenance works for protection against harmful effects of water” (hereinafter “Programme”).



Appropriate assessment

- Since 2007, Croatia – within its sector of environment - has established a national ecological network as the initial stage of preparation of the Natura 2000 network. At the same time it introduced a procedure for Appropriate Assessments (AA).
- Already at that time, Croatian nature protection legislation showed a high level of compliance with the Habitats Directive requirements, and, as the accession to the EU approaches, more emphasis was given to the AA of plans.

SINP as nature protection body

- The draft “measures and conditions” are prepared by the State Institute for Nature Protection (SINP), a central public body dealing with all expert tasks of nature conservation in Croatia.
- It carries out expert work in relation to establishment of the ecological network Natura 2000 and plays a role of expert control of the Appropriate Assessment. SINP

Situation before consultation process

- Traditionally, the relationship between nature protection and water management sector was burdened by past problems
- In many cases see each other would perceive as an obstacle in fulfillment of their tasks, rather than as a partner for meeting common goals.
- The gradual change in particular in relation to the EU-accession tasks, led to the formation of a joint working group in 2011 whose aim is to define common steps to be taken in the impact assessment of the Programme not only that year but also every subsequent year.

Looking for approach

- At the very beginning, it was not clear how to approach the entire issue: it was obvious that the Programme as such should not be subject to AA but particular activities should be.
- The question was how to sort them out. A lot of mistrust ruled between the parties - conservationists and water managers - originating mostly in their different education with limited understanding of mutual aims, official duties and work methods.

Simple management practices could improve the situation

- Previous field experience has shown need for adjusting the techniques of management in accordance with rather simple good practices (i.e., preservation of riparian vegetation wherever possible, preservation of green infrastructure, intermittent mowing, appropriate timing etc.)
- In this way it is possible to achieve a significant improvement from the point of biodiversity and landscape protection and even from the point of efficient water management.



The programme

- The draft Programme, as an implementation document for the whole country, was characterized by a huge number of specific activities and measures.
- It was mostly prepared by field engineers familiar with standard water management practices only.
- Whilst it listed a huge number of varying activities like grass mowing, cutting of shrubs and trees, removal of wood and biological deposits, unblocking of torrents, maintenance of dikes and inundation areas and fixing of small damages on water managing structures,



The misunderstandings

- The works were described in technical terms, its real content, i.e., what was really intended to do, was not clear to the other readers like conservationists, which led to sometimes unnecessary conflicts due to misunderstandings.
- There were also only very brief (if any) descriptions of where the planned interventions should actually take place (spatial identification by water course kilometers only, and no maps).

No or late involvement of nature protection

- Another problem was the late or partial involvement of the nature protection aspect in the procedure;
- because of that, conditions could sometimes not be issued or, if they were, conflicts occurred subsequently as regards their proper implementation (due to poor communication, they were sometimes not feasible or ineffective).
- In order to find a way forward, it was essential to first remedy of inadequate communication between the sectors.

First attempt

- Drafted and amended program of maintenance work in the field of protection against the harmful effects of water (Croatian waters)
- Formed a working group
- Expert work began on the measures but the 2011 deadline was too short
- A goal was set to perform the evaluation plan for 2012 within a reasonable time (first round of meetings were part of the preparatory activities)

A large number of works, eg 2011th

- Dispense work in groups based on technical descriptions, then for simpler works provide general conditions and for more complex Appropriate Assessment is prescribed to be performed later
- Form working groups based on the small watermanagement units and counties and rely on county institutions for nature conservation and water management

Division of works in groups

- Basic division -
 - Group I - Mostly works of mowing and some maintenance work (gates, weirs)
 - Group II. - Predominantly work of reducing vegetation and cutting
 - Group III i - interventions for which it is necessary to make the detailed documentation and determine the location to be able to conduct the Appropriate Assessment:
 - - various earthworks, formation of the bank, removal of sediment, paving of the banks, various hydraulic engineering constructions
- There is still a large number of interventions



Problems

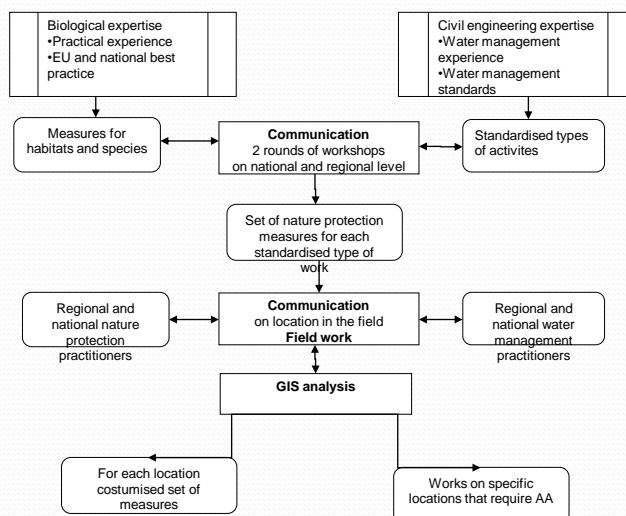
- Interventions from various groups were technologically related and formed a unit so that corresponding works could not be modified or shifted in time at will.,
- Description of activities had no exact location was quite a poor indicator of possible impacts on nature .
- These issues all remained pending for the subsequent planning year.?



Expert cooperation established

- To avoid the above problems in 2012, it was decided to establish cooperation between the nature conservancy and HV at all levels, from national to regional,
- Start early communication about the next Programme (the planned meetings were already part of planned preparatory activities).
- To facilitate this, HV provided improved standardized descriptions of particular interventions and mostly digital raster and CAD maps for all planned maintenance work.
- SINP, in turn, provided GIS layers related to nature protection assets.

Scheme of Consultation Proces



Contribution of SINP staff

- SINP staff, mostly consisting of biologists, put together all the previous experience in relation to impacts of particular works on various valuable habitats and species;
- Consulted external experts; and checked the measures defined in various other national documents as well as the best EU practice.
- They inspired themselves – in addition to numerous internal discussions – also with Irish guidance documents publicized to facilitate AA of water works and interventions as they had proven themselves as well-suited to Croatian conditions too.

Expert work basis for consultation

- Ultimately, SINP developed a list of almost 40 standardized types of measures (with alphanumeric markings), related to mitigation of general impacts on biodiversity/landscape or on particular species and habitats and their conservation requirements.
- These measures were then combined in the sets (“batteries”) appropriate for each standard type of work as defined by the HV technical procedures and standards.
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GIS further analysis

- In the later stage, through GIS analysis and field work/consultations, these initial sets were modified and appended based on the specific location and results of the field work.
- Those types of works or activities that could not be mitigated by a specific combination of measures, and/or would be likely to significantly impact on the ecological network, would be further sent to individual AA procedures.

Workshops

- Two series of workshops performed
- Proposed measures discussed with water management and nature conservation
- County institutions and SINP performed field work
- Conditions issued and AA prescribed for some works
- Established communication and better understanding between sectors – basis for improvement in future years



Consultation established on lower levels

- Local nature protection and water management practitioners jointly assessed the location of each planned intervention in the field and sent their report with a proposed set of nature protection measures or changes in the activities to both SINP and HV.
- SINP would then give further advice or make additional field visits in case of any problems. In that way the large workload was broken into smaller bits.

Database of measures

- Set up a database of standardized protection measures for particular habitat types and species.
- This database makes it possible to create tailor-made sets of conditions for particular watercourses and/or projects.
- Last but not least, wherever feasible a photo documentation is taken before and after particular interventions for both documentation of the works and avoidance of any suspicion of erroneous accomplishment.

[illegible]

Outline of measures

- Three groups:
- Gradual approach from maximal measures to reduced measures in the urban area
- (i.e limitations to mowing)
- Attempt to conserve vegetation/habitats
- Specific measures for species and habitats (i.e. birds, water vegetation)
- Specific measures for invasive species
- Goal to achieve optimal trade off between time and resources to the maximal benefit of nature and efficient flood protection

Basis for the measures in the water management plan

- new level of working cooperation between the conservationists and water managers at all levels of management from the field staff to the policy level staff.
- This has created a great potential for further mutual cooperation in the future and, in particular regions, it opens up the opportunity
- Joint planning of conservation measures on particularly valuable watercourses – something which would have been considered a pure fiction only a few years ago

Implementation in the national water management plan

- The measures and consultation process performed for the yearly maintenance plan was used for the creation of the conservation measures for the national water management plan
- This new set of measures which is more advanced and comprehensive will be applied on the specific sites in the further elaboration of water management activities

A. General -reccomendations

- - face-to-face communication and joint field work are irreplaceable since joint meetings and field examination provide real data and realistic solutions
- - applying systematic instead of random approach to a problem the extent of which seems unmanageable leads to satisfactory and timely results
- - learning about the counterpart's legislative framework, duties and technical expertise led to better mutual understanding, trust and respect
- - a system for standardised documentation in GIS/CAD and spread sheets is necessary as well as informal venues for information exchange such as dedicated e-mail lists

Particular reccomendations

- - standardizing water management tasks and customized sets of nature protection measures for each type of work avoided the need for screening for AA in hundreds of cases and enabled to identify those which really might threaten N2K features
- - defining sets of measures must be based on biological and nature protection expertise and based on the best EU practices so that specific biodiversity expert cooperation on this task across the EU is necessary
- - involvement of regional and local bodies with good knowledge of field situation provided trustworthy results and enabled to mitigate impacts of many interventions far before their implementation started while enforcing mutual trust of central institutions (relying on reliable data now)





Thank you for your attention

- Discussion
- What are your experiences in consultation and communication with large national stakeholders in regards to nature protection?
- How to make management measures inforcable (specific measurable achievable relevant timely) SMART?