

RESOLUTION ResDip (2008) 1

**ON THE REGULATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA
OF PROTECTED AREAS**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 February 2008
at the 1018th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

APPENDIX 5

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2013

State: Bulgaria

Name of the area: Central Balkan National Park

Central authority concerned:

Name: Ministry of Environment and Water

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Authority responsible for its management:

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I. General information

1. Natural heritage (general abiotic description: geomorphology, geology and hydrogeology, habitats, flora, fauna, landscape) – State of conservation

1.1. Environment: changes or deterioration in the environment, of natural or anthropogenic origin, accidental or permanent, actual or anticipated

No changes.

1.2. Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetation cover; presumed causes

Annually CBNPD carries out monitoring of target flora species (*forest ecosystems, medicinal plants and 10 vascular plants*) included in the program for environmental monitoring of the Park (part of the National Biodiversity Monitoring System in Bulgaria). No deviations were observed in the populations of the plant species in the last years.

1.3. Fauna: changes in the sedentary or migratory populations; congregating, egg-laying and breeding grounds

There are 23 fauna species (*1 fish, 1 reptile, 14 birds and 7 mammals*) included in the program for environmental monitoring of the Park. Yearly CBNPD collects and analyzes the fauna data. Populations of fauna species are stable – no significant deviations were observed in the condition of populations in the last years.

In addition, in 2013 the CBNPD took part in the 37th Midwinter water birds counting, organized by Wetland International. On the 12th and 13th of January park employees, together with representatives from the Federation of nature-conservation NGOs “Green Balkans” monitored the ponds on route Kazanlak – Dunavtsi – Koprinka Dam – Buzovgrad – Razhena – Nikolaevo – Kazanlak.

The CBNPD organized independently massive spring and autumn monitoring of chamois, massive spring monitoring of brown bear and monitoring of red deer in rut. All monitoring activities are carried out according to established methods of Executive Environmental Agency. In 2013, the CBNPD optimizes the process of collecting field information by developing personalized sets of forms for each employee responsible for monitoring of the biodiversity on the territory of the Central Balkan.

2. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context

2.1. Cultural heritage

2.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage

No changes.

2.2. Socio-economic context

2.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context

No changes.

3. Education and scientific interest

3.1. Visitors – Information policy

3.1.1. Arrangements for receiving and informing the public (building, booklets, maps, cards, etc.)

CBNPD has produced educational brochure and album edition in two versions – English and Bulgarian. These publications are dedicated to the United Nation Decade on Biodiversity 2011 – 2020. The educational brochure have presented the Central Balkan as home of many rare and endemic species. There are pictures and small articles about 16 higher plants and 8 animal species with high conservation value. The album edition briefly presents National Park. There are numerous photos and brief descriptions of abiotic and biotic components of the protected area, its national and international status.

In 2013, CBNPD also produced photo exhibition that present some of the most beautiful places in the Park. The exhibition is intended for visits in settlements near the Park. It is suitable for presentation in the town halls, galleries, libraries, and schools.

In terms of raising the visitor's access to information in 2013 CBNPD renovate one main entrance of the National park, constructed and mounted more than 30 signboards, more than 30 signs that affirm regimes of the protected area, 3 information boards. Also, repair more than 20 information boards and part of the infrastructure in the points for recreation on the territory of all park sections. By partners, CBNPD was able to renovate part of the marking of touristic routes in the Park.

3.1.2. Frequentation by visitors and behavior (number, distribution in time and space)

Visitor monitoring is executed on a regular scale (interviews in terms of environmental impact and social aspects (tourist flows)) at 12 NP gates for one week during the four summer months (total 4 weeks).

3.1.3. Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)

3.2. Scientific research

3.2.1. Current or completed research (observation, experimentation, etc.; identification or inventory of the species listed in the appendices to the Bern Convention, etc.)

At the end of July, a team of scientists from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland, made a study of the plant genus *Hieracium* L. on the territory of park section "Tazha" as a part of the development of a new volume of the Flora of the Republic of Bulgaria.

3.2.2. Scientific publications

No publications.

4. Site description (vulnerability, protection status, ownership, documentation)

4.1. Changes in legislation or regulations

No changes.

4.2. Changes in ownership title (conversion to public property, rentals, etc.)

No changes.

4.3. Extension or transfer, new uses (for example, conversion into total reserve)

5. Site management (management plans, budget and personnel)

5.1. Improvements made

5.1.1. Ecological action affecting the flora and biotopes; controls of fauna

In 2013 CBNPD signed a contract for the implementation of technical project for restoration of natural habitats and anti-erosion measures in CB National Park as a part of the project № DIR-5113325-12-109 “Central Balkan – Park for everyone” funded through Operational Programme Environment 2007 – 2013. Activities will be carried out on five sites (22 localities) with a total area of 189.024 hectares. The project provides implementation of large number of activities directed to protection of rich Park’s biodiversity and provides conditions for sustainable and safety tourism.

As a part of implementation of the project, “Update of Central Balkan National Park Management Plan” a contract was signed in 2013 , for preparation of the second main part of the Management plan – prescriptive part. It includes the long-term goals and restrictions, second evaluation, norms, regimes, conditions and recommendations for the implementation of activities, operational tasks and requirements for protection and use, an overview of fulfilment of the objectives and tasks. Public hearings of the updated plan will be held in early March 2014.

In 2013 finished the project LIFE07 NAT/BG/000068 “Conservation of Imperial Eagle and Saker Falcon in key Natura 2000 in Bulgaria” in which one of the associated beneficiaries was CBNPD. The Park was responsible for *Action C7 „Create a model for sustainable management of upland pastures to support souslik colonies as main prey of imperial eagle and saker falcons“*. One of the project aims was to create a model pasture managed in sustainable way, using traditional pastoral techniques that have been in the basis of the favorable status of the souslik. Upland sheep pen and shepherd’s shelter were constructed in 2010. In addition was restored an abandoned water fountain that is the main water source for the sheep. The 50 hectares of pastures, overgrown by juniper, were partially mechanically cleared. During 2013, Park experts carried out monitoring on maintenance of cleaned pasture by livestock grazing in the locality “Rozinska mandra” in Park section Klisura.

The project LIFE08 NAT/BG/000278 „Recovery of the Populations of Large European Vultures in Bulgaria” started in 2010. It aims are recovering the populations of the three large European vulture species through conservation measures and improving the institutional capacity for their conservation. Some project activities are carried out near to the border of National Park. In 2013, seventeen vultures were released from the adaptation cage in Tazha village, close to National Park. . Another 12 vultures were placed in the adaptation cage and will be released in 2014.

The project LIFE07NAT/IT/000502 EX-TRA “Improving the conditions for large carnivore conservation – a transfer of best practices” finished in 2013. Partners in the Project were, Balkani Wildlife Society and Ministry of Environment and Water. Some activities from project were carried out in National Park – stakeholder analysis – identification of the most important local groups affected by the bear, creation of bear GPS database, collecting of DNA sample, bear was captured and fit with GPS collar establishments of Bear Emergency Team in NP

- 5.1.2. Protection against the elements (fire, water regime)
- 5.1.3. Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)
- 5.1.4. Field equipment (hides and study facilities)
- 5.1.5. Waste management

In 2011 CBNPD implemented Eco-management and Audit System – EMAS (EU Regulation № 1221/2009). The scope of the eco-management system includes a Central Office of the Directorate in town of Gabrovo and management activities of the National Park. To increase competence in the application of EMAS, in July 2013, employees in the Central Office had special training. In July an external audit of eco-management system was made. The

environmental statement of the Park has been updated and published on the website of the Directorate.

5.1.6. Use of renewable energy systems

5.2. Management

5.2.1. Administrative department: changes made

5.2.2. Wardens' department: changes made

5.2.3. Internal policing measures

5.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action

II. Influence of the award of the European Diploma of Protected Areas

III. Conditions and/or recommendations for award or renewal

Progress regarding to the conditions to the award:

Public Advisory Council for Central Balkan NP was established in 2010 as a result from the project "Model for Management with the Stakeholders Participation of Central Balkan – part of the National Ecological Network". The Council consists of 20 representatives of different stakeholders – representatives of municipal authorities and village mayors, chalet keepers, local tourism entrepreneurs, tour operators, artists, representatives of scientific and non-government conservation sector, users of park bio-resources, mass media, Ministry of Environment and Water, and state forest agency.

On the 25th and 26th of November was held a working session of the Public Advisory Council in village of Ribaritsa, near the Park border. This year in the meeting took part also members of Science Advisory Board of Central Balkan National Park. On the session, the members were aware with the results of implementation of the projects "Update of Central Balkan National Park Management Plan" and "Central Balkan – Park for everyone" funded through the Operational Programme Environment, 2007 – 2013. On the meeting were also discussed issues related to grazing in the park territory. Scientists and users of park bio-resources had the possibility to discuss together contentious issues related to the ways of use and loads of Park's pastures.

Progress regarding to the recommendations to the award:

After the accession of Bulgaria to EU there is an increased interest in the use of mountain pastures in the Park. In 2010 compared with 2006, for example, the number of sheep grazing in the Park has grown 12 times. The main reason is the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and opportunities for farmers to get compensatory payments from the various schemes of the CAP. Due to increased interest in the use of pastures, Park Directorate applies a step system of assessing applications and allocating eligible pasture areas.

During 2013, two-tier system was used again. On the first step, the Directorate provides pastures to those who wish to use the same areas as in 2012. This group includes farmers approved under sub-measure 4, measure 214 "Traditional practices for seasonal grazing animals" (Pastoralism) –, 2007-2013. On the second step, vacant pastures were distributed among remaining farmers. CBNPD is working on a proposal for changes in the said sub-measure of the Rural Development Programme for the next programming period (2014 – 2020) in order to eliminate some of the problems with the management of high mountain pastures.