

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018

Country:

Federal Republic of Germany, Free State of Bavaria

Name of protected area awarded a European Diploma:

“Weltenburger Enge” Nature Reserve

Authority responsible:

Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Umwelt und Verbraucherschutz

[Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection]

Address:

Postfach 81 01 40

81901 München

Tel.: +49(0) 89/92 14-00

Fax: +49 (0) 89/92 14-34 97

E-mail: poststelle@stmuv.bayern.de

Contact:

Josef Seidenschwarz

Tel.: 089/9214-3321

E-mail: josef.seidenschwarz@stmuv.bayern.de

Authority responsible for managing the protected area:

Landratsamt Kelheim

[Kelheim County Chief Executive Office]

Address:

Postfach 14 62

93303 Kelheim

Tel: 0 94 41/207-0

Fax 0 94 41/207-1150

Contact:

Susanne Böhme

Tel.: 0 94 41/207-4314

Fax: 0 94 41/207-4350

E-mail: susanne.boehme@landkreis-kelheim.de

Manager of the nature reserve:

Franziska Jäger

Tel.: 0 94 41/207-7324

Fax: 0 94 41/207-7350

E-mail: franziska.jaeger@voef.de

1. Conditions:

Conditions for the extension of July 2018:

- 1. conduct an expertise on legal options to stop or at least regulate disembarking of private boats on the right bank of the Danube between the Weltenburg landing place and river kilometre 2416, and to ban overnight camping and campfires in the whole European Diploma area. Report to the Council of Europe by 2020 at the latest;**

In October 2018 the nature conservation authority at the Kelheim County Chief Executive Office and the area manager held a first meeting with the Kelheim Kanuclub (Canoe Club) that, as largest user association, has a particular interest in the recreational use of the area.

At this meeting, among other things, the Canoe Club suggested setting up additional signs marking the protected area for water sports enthusiasts directly along the water course in order to make it clear to guests and locals that they are entering the conservation area „by water“.

- 2. extend, wherever ecologically and touristically worthwhile and as soon as possible, the stricter regulations of the decree on the Nature Reserve Hirschberg und Altmuehlleiten to the area of the Nature Reserve Weltenburger Enge to make the rules more comprehensible for visitors and supervision more effective, and to underline the unity of both sites as an ecological entity;**

A first meeting on this topic took place in September 2018 between the Bavarian Ministry of the Environment and the nature conservation authorities of the Government of Lower Bavaria and of the Kelheim County Chief Executive Office within the scope of an expert discussion on the decision of the Bavarian Council of Ministers to establish the Weltenburger Enge as a Natural Monument.

- 3. take more responsibility for the preservation of the archaeological monument Keltenwall (Celtic wall) and stop further damage and erosion through visitor management or appropriate installations to limit hiking and mountain-biking on the monument, in co-operation with the government agency for monument conservation;**

This goal was already met by the installation of signs prohibiting the riding of bikes or mountain bikes. It is the aim to pursue a further improvement of the situation.

2. Recommendations:

Recommendations of the extension of July 2018:

- 1. achieve, as soon as possible, the formal extension of the European Diploma area to 934 hectares, change the name to “Weltenburger Enge, Hirschberg und Altmuehlleiten” and adapt as soon as possible all signposts, brochures, maps and leaflets to the new area. Prepare and adopt, by 2020, an overall management plan in addition to the existing Natura 2000 management plan;**

Officials and other parties responsible are to explore the prerequisites for the formal extension of the European Diploma area and the preparation of an overall management plan. At a meeting with the nature conservation authority of the Government of Lower Bavaria in October 2018 the need for an update of the status report and the conservation and development plan was pointed out. The leaflets on the nature reserve and on trekking in the nature reserve already refer to the total area.

- 2. assess the effects of wave disturbances, caused by larger boats, on the river bank and on selected and relevant species, especially fish, freshwater molluscs and dragonflies;**

There already exists an expertise from the year 2007 on the “effects of wave disturbances caused by larger boats on fish fauna in the Weltenburger Enge” that was commissioned by the shipping companies of Kelheim.

The authorities have meanwhile carried out a specific search concerning specially protected species, such as the Danube freshwater snail, and regarding the still pending request of the shipping companies (see 5. Other information) an expertise is to be prepared by the nature conservation authority of the Government of Lower Bavaria and the fishing advisory department in view of the

expected effects of wave disturbances caused by larger boats on the habitat function of shallow zones and river banks.. Practicable regulations are to be drawn up on the basis of these findings, the enforcement of which shall be documented using the constantly recorded data of passenger shipping. Further investigations can be carried out as part of the update of the conservation and development plan.

3. consider a harmonisation of information boards and a better planning of their distribution across the area and add the European Diploma logo at least to those boards containing information on natural and cultural highlights within the European Diploma area. This includes the information point at the boat landing in Kelheim. Immediately add information about the role of the European Diploma on information boards, at least those at the main access routes;

A concept for channelling visitors, with uniformly laid out guidelines for the protected area, was already prepared some years ago. There is now to be coordination and harmonisation of information and signboards to be distributed in the area. The European Diploma is pointed out as a general rule in publications as well as on information signs (e.g. flags with the corresponding information printed on them).

The area manager is currently checking all nature reserve information boards for the presence of the European Diploma logo. Wherever necessary, the logo will be supplemented over the course of the coming year with brief information about its meaning.

4. increase and conduct more efficient control of illegal mountain-biking off the official mountain-bike routes;

To date, there are no official mountain bike routes in the area. There are, however, combined walking and cycling routes that are also used by mountain bikers.

Unfortunately, endeavours undertaken up to now have not been able to sufficiently counteract illegal mountain-biking. These efforts are to be further intensified.

5. carefully examine the opening of official viewing points taking into consideration the natural value of the specific site, and close down a number of uncontrolled and unsafe spots;

The viewing points are to be checked within the framework of the updated visitor channelling concept, and are to be improved or closed down, if necessary. In this context, the question of any additionally required traffic safeguarding measures is to be clarified with the higher level authorities and the Bavarian State Forest Administration. In particular it is to be prevented that visitors randomly set off in search of viewing points.

6. put an emphasis on the natural succession of forests and the development of more natural forest reserves in the total area and avoid clear cuts of any size. Minimise commercial exploitation of forests and stop the use of heavy machinery in forestry management. Thoroughly assess any intervention in the forest around the Befreiungshalle and refrain from any forest management that cannot be considered ecological;

Forestry management is carried out according to the Nature Reserve Ordinance and is essentially implemented on the basis of good practice. A further minimisation of forest use as well as a reduction in the use of heavy forestry machinery would be desirable; however, this can only be implemented together with the landowners and with the forestry management. It is planned in particular to approach the Kelheim forestry management of the Bavarian State Forest Administration in this connection.

A renewed initiative was started by private sources to clear the area around the Befreiungshalle. It was claimed that earlier there had been an unimpeded view to the town of Kelheim. Neither old aerial images and photographs nor the 2007 expertise of the Bayerische Schlösserverwaltung (Bavarian Administration of State-Owned Palaces) reveal the existence of such an unimpeded view. Creating such a view would lead to substantial intervention in the forest to the east of the Befreiungshalle. The nature conservation authorities continue to reject clear cuts to expose the Befreiungshalle.

7. recognise the need for professional, on-site supervision of the area, including fieldwork by professional and permanent staff, and envisage an increase in capacity of permanent supervision staff;

The area manager has been in permanent employment since April 2018. A ranger is to be employed through the Altmühlal Nature Park from the beginning of 2019, for the management of the nature park

area of the counties Neumarkt, Regensburg and Kelheim (however, under a limited-term contract). The applications process is currently underway. The European Diploma area lies within the specified area of the Altmühltal Natural Park.

8. assess the technical possibilities and financial support for restoration of the Klösterl cultural monument.

General support is given to measures for maintaining the important cultural monument. The nature conservation authority at the Kelheim County Chief Executive Office will approach the institutions responsible for monument conservation in this respect. Maintenance of the cultural monument cannot be financed from nature conservation funds, already due to budgetary reasons.

3. Area Management:

The contact person previously responsible for the Nature Reserve at the Kelheim County Chief Executive Office, Mr. Michael Littlel, went into partial retirement on November 1st 2018; he is followed by Ms. Susanne Böhme.

Dieter Winterstein, the forest ranger in charge at the Kelheim Forestry Authority, has also retired and is followed by Daniel Meyer who is now responsible for the Kelheim forest area.

4. Boundaries:

No changes have been made to the boundaries of the area.

5. Other information:

A decision has not yet been reached by the Government of Lower Bavaria on the request by shipping companies that the suspension of shipping operations at a water level of less than 2.25 m should no longer apply, and that instead the speed of boats should be reduced in critical areas at a water level of less than 2.40 m.

Minimal rainfall and the record summer of 2018 have caused extremely low levels of water in the river Danube for an exceptionally long period (lowest level in Kelheim: 1.98 m) and also a significant temperature rise in the water body.

For a prolonged period, the low water level and a gravel bank at the level of the Römerwand made it impossible for passenger boats to land. The request for the removal of the gravel bank by means of dredging operations in the river was not granted.

Due to the weather conditions and also due to the suspension of shipping operations the impact of leisure activities on and around the water body was extremely high this year over a prolonged period.

The film about the area manager was broadcast on Bavarian television (Bayerisches Fernsehen) on 01.10.2018.

The idea of a third national park for Bavaria has since been dismissed by the Bavarian State Government. By Council of Minister's decision, however, it has been decided that the particularly significant parts of the Nature Reserve Weltenburger Enge (Danube with adjacent rocks and steep slopes) are to become Bavaria's first National Natural Monument. Besides a first meeting between experts of the Ministry of the Environment and the nature conservation authorities of the Government of Lower Bavaria and the Kelheim County Chief Executive Office, first of all, an information event was held at the Ministry of the Environment with user associations most likely to be affected.