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EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF
NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

BAYERISCHER WALD NATIONAL PARK
(Federal Republic of Germany)

On-the-spot appraisal
by
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INTRODUCTION

At its meeting in May 1984, the Committee of Experts on Protected Areas examined the application from the Bayerischer Wald National Park (Federal Republic of Germany) and recognised its international value. The application was made for category A.

The on-the-spot appraisal was made on 21 and 22 August 1984 by Mr P Baum and myself. We were accompanied by Mr Bibelriether and Mr Thiel of the national park administration and Mr Wildenhain (Federal Republic of Germany). I wish to thank them all for their support.

This appraisal is based on observations made on the spot, discussions on that occasion, and on points 1-3 of Appendix II concerning category A (1).

1. Findings

1.1 General observations

From the outset, I wish to make it clear that in my opinion this is a park of European value, a worthy candidate for the category A Diploma, despite some inadequacies which prompt misgivings and consequently require that the Council of Europe make the award subject to conditions.

The objectives of the park's management are (3):

- preservation of the character of the region and the habitats of local flora and fauna
- research
- public education
- recreation, provided that it does not upset the balance of nature.

In addition, the park is the only biosphere reserve in the Federal Republic of Germany.

A description of the park may be of some assistance. Subsequently, I shall explain the reasons for recommending that the category A Diploma be awarded, on the basis of observations on the spot, study of the relevant literature and knowledge of other places where the Diploma has been renewed or refused.

1.2 Description of the national park

The national park set up in 1970 is 98% wooded and lies in the Land of Bavaria, some 150 km north-east of Munich, bordering on the protected region of Sumava (Bohemian Forest).

Exposure:	mainly south-west
Average length:	17 km
Average width:	8 km
Total area:	13,000 hectares

- Height above sea level: - lowest point: approx. 660 m
- highest point: 1,453 m (Grosser Rachel)
- Annual precipitation: - in the plain: 1,000-1,300 mm
- at altitude: some 2,000 mm
- Annual average temperature: - in the plain: 7 degrees
- at altitude: 3-4 degrees

Precise particulars of climate, geology and soil, plant associations, fauna and flora, will be found in the Diploma application (2).

1.3 General impression

This is one of the most impressive protected regions in Europe, not only because its forest landscape, in central Europe, is imposing in itself, but more particularly because of the competent authorities' untiring efforts to protect nature and the landscape (see para. 1.1). Despite the obvious differences, there are affinities with the Swiss National Park (category A Diploma).

1.4 Important reasons in favour of granting the category A Diploma

1.4.1 The only land-owner in the park is the Land of Bavaria, which proclaimed it a national park in 1970 - the first of its kind in the Federal Republic of Germany.

1.4.2 Furthermore, the park is answerable to a single ministry, the Bavarian Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry, which has hitherto fully backed the park management. Thanks for this are due to the Minister, Mr Eisenmann.

1.4.3 Half of the park (6,400 hectares) has been placed under strict protection, also covering forestry and hunting. This is the largest virtually completely protected area in central Europe. Its totally protected area can be compared only with that of the Swiss National Park, covering some 160 km², a third of it (some 6,000 ha) wooded.

Mention should be made to two particular aspects of this protected region:

- two places, covering some 140 ha, are still virtually virgin forest (Rachelsee, Lerchenberg);
- on 1 August 1983, strong winds in the western part of the park caused 31,000 m³ of damage to trees. Some 20,000 m³ of fallen trees and branches in the reserve itself were not utilised, but left to allow the forest to develop naturally as it would in the case of wind damage in virgin forest. This course, which was contested in some forestry circles, nevertheless deserves support in the interests of conservation and forestry research.

1.4.4 In the remainder of the woodland, in the so-called forestry region (some 50% of the park), there are still some workings, but the park's management shows a tendency to reduce it progressively, for example by

reducing the normal felling rate of some 85,000 m³ by almost half (28,000 m³) to begin with, and eventually stopping tree-felling altogether. More will be said of this and the general question of forestry in due course.

In 1970, the Minister Mr Eisemann decided that "not one km of forest track then planned will now be authorised in a national park" (7).

1.4.5 There are precise plans and corresponding measures to control game numbers (red deer and roe deer), viz to reduce the excessive numbers of large game, to reduce game in three park enclosures by state hunters, to reduce the number of places where game is fed.

1.4.6 Cultural and historical values are also taken into account in the park. For instance, various earlier facilities and workings have been restored as historic monuments: two old-style logging installations and their associated dams, some very old glass-works with extensive grazing land.

1.4.7 The three subjects of "research, education and information" are taken very seriously by the park administration. We shall mention only a few examples among the abundant and excellent literature:

- Research

Since 1970, over 150 scientific projects have been completed, a large proportion dealing with nature protection in the national park (applied research).

- Education and information

In this connection, we quote a statement to be found in the Diploma application, the accuracy of which we are able to confirm:

The same applies to the facilities provided for visitors, the excellent network of rambling paths, animal and plant reserves and the National Park House. It would be difficult in Europe to match the programmes for visitors, particularly the organised tours and lectures.

The Park House near Schöнау in particular, and its surroundings, merit special mention. It should be noted however, that much more modest information centres can do the job equally well or even more impressively (eg the Camargue nature reserve).

Some 30,000 people benefit each year from a vast guided visit programme.

Apart from the Park House, a large proportion of the 1.5 million visitors is accounted for by facilities on the edge of the park (eg an animal and a plant reserve, a special area devoted to the forest's history, a play area and a forest school). This not only enables information to be provided, but also keeps down the pressure of visitors on a large part of the park. It might perhaps have been better to site some of the facilities further into the park. Now, unfortunately, it is virtually impossible to do anything about this. At any event, it would not seem wise to do so by altering the park boundaries.

1.4.8 Management and finance

Virtually nothing needs to be said on this point. By comparison with other European protected regions, the park is well endowed from the point of view of finance and staff and as a result is managed in exemplary fashion.

1.5 Further observations

Despite, or in addition to all these positive observations, I am bound to make a number of other comments which absolutely must be taken into account in assessing the Diploma application, viz:

1.5.1 At the present time, roughly half the national park is still worked in the so-called forestry region (Waldflegebereich). Although an immediate stop is not feasible, the following must be put into effect as quickly as possible:

- a. The present annual felling rate of some 55,000 m³ should be halved over the current management period (1981-1992) and further reduced to zero over the following period (this lapse of time should suffice to enable the saw-mills deep in the park to adjust to the new situation, severely though it may affect them).
- b. During the intervening period, forestry working still tolerated should if possible serve to promote a transformation of the existing populations into natural potential forest associations. For this purpose, extremely subtle methods should be used, taking qualitative ecological analyses into account (6).

This report (6) is warmly recommended as a practical guide to ecological forest treatment in natural conditions well beyond the national park itself and for forestry in general.

Reference should be made also to paras. 4.2.2 (forestry working compatible with a national park) and 4.2.3 (improvement of populations by treatment measures) in the study.

- c. The use of fertilisers and pesticides should be immediately banned throughout the forestry area.

1.5.2 Recreation

The management's efforts to channel the constantly growing number of visitors towards a small number of areas or particular paths should be consistently continued. Any tendency towards undirected "free" visits, away from the proper paths, must be stopped from the outset.

1.5.3 Legal status

To all appearances, the national park at present has no regulations. In the interests of lasting consolidation of existing achievements and future plans, taking into account the above considerations, and particularly so as to avoid any mistaken development, it is essential to fill this gap immediately. This is not in any way to cast doubt on the good faith of the park authorities or on what has been achieved under their auspices.

2. Conclusion

In view of the facts outlined above, I propose that the Council of Europe award the category A Diploma to the Bayerischer Wald National Park, subject to the following conditions:

3. Conditions

1. Stop all forestry working in the "Waldpflegebereich" (currently about 50% of the park) by the end of the next planning period, ie 20 years hence (see para. 1.5.1 (a)), gradually establishing a strict reserve by then.

This will entail taking into account the points made in 1.5.1 (b) and (c).

2. The flow of summer and winter visitors should be channeled - apart from the special facilities - along the roads and paths provided for them, so as not to impair the objectives of the park as a candidate for the category A Diploma.

Consequently, for example, certain access roads will need to be closed to traffic from time to time; skiing must be restricted to specified tracks of little value for nature conservation. Visitors must in general be kept away from protected areas.

3. The question of hunting must be dealt with in such a way as to comply clearly with the requirement of a category A Diploma award.

4. In the park's rare unwooded areas a farming plan should be drawn up (eg measures to combat the spread of brushwood into the marshes) for lasting conservation of farmland in a near-natural state and protection of architectural assets. Moreover, building and alterations out of keeping with the surroundings should be banned in these open areas unless absolutely necessary. Exceptions should be made only on grounds of demonstrable public interest.

5. Before renewal of the Diploma, evidence should be provided of proper waste and sewage disposal from all buildings in the park.

6. By the same time, mandatory nature conservation regulations must be drawn up and applied in the park (see para. 1.5.3 and Lit. note 7).

Literature

- (1) Regulations for the European Diploma, Resolution (73) 4 of 19 January 1973.
- (2) Diploma application by the Bayerischer Wald National Park (SN-ZP (84) 26 of 26 May 1984).
- (3) Council of Europe information memorandum on the meeting of the Protected Areas Committee of Experts on 14-15 May 1984 (SN-ZP (84) 28).
- (4) Various publications by the Park Management on nature and landscape protection.
- (5) Bibelriether H: Entscheidung für den Urwald-Sturmwurf im Nationalpark "Bayerischer Wald", in Zeitschrift Nationalpark, No. 41, 4/83 D-8352 Grafenau (Morsak).
- (6) Oekologische Wartanalyse. Nationalpark "Bayerischer Wald", No. 10 in the series.
- (7) Urwaldwärts. R Kaub. Umwelt. Natur. Nationalpark No. 45, 4/84. D-8352 Grafenau (Morsak).