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METHODOLOGY FOR COASTAL ECOSYSTEM VALUATION FOR FACILITATION OF SPATIAL PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

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Categories

Building networks for ecological restoration: collaborative processes to facilitate knowledge transfer and decision making
EU LIFE as means for safeguarding and protecting environment and culture

FOCUS

The main focus of the research is approaches to coastal planning in Latvia. The Authors have developed a methodology of economical assessment of coastal ecosystems and their services for planning processes, comprising all the integral aspects of coastal management, such as economical, ecological, legal, political, cultural, historical and social, therefore addressing the stakeholders of all the involved sectors.

BACKGROUND

In Latvia biodiversity is one of the main values the coastal sustainable development is based on. The total length of the Latvian coastline stretches for nearly 500 km, it forms c.a. 1/4 or 26% of the state borderline and already now the population in the coastal area, which is considered a territory within 5-10 km from the coast, reaches up to one million inhabitants.

Coastal erosion has always been a sensitive issue in the coastal area due to the natural causing factors of the phenomenon – storms, as well as of the impacts of the human activities, both often equaling in unpredictability and uncontrollability. In Latvia the existing management tools do not ensure cooperation of the stakeholders and involved parties in the coastal area. Lack of tolerance between the involved sectors combined with poor perception of the resources of Latvian coastal area result in inefficient decision making and spatial planning processes.

Within the year 2013 an initial framework was developed for evaluation of the coastal ecosystems and their services in Latvia and use of the obtained values for assessment of the planned actions in spatial planning and decision making processes. The methodology based on economic evaluation of ecosystem services, including cost-benefit analysis, was presented to the coastal municipalities and will serve as a basis for consequent development for coastal protection, as well as for enhancement of understanding of coastal processes, need for ecological restoration, and creation of a collaboration platform with active involvement of all the sectors for facilitation of the decision making and planning.

FOLLOW-UP

As of June 2014, the further development and adaptation of the methodology is put in practice within EU LIFE + programme co-financed project “LIFE EcosystemServices” which will be implemented in 2014-2018 in the partnership of Latvian Nature Conservation Agency, Association “Baltic Coasts” and Municipality of Saulkrasti. The aim of the Project is to test this newly introduced approach on Latvian scale on municipal level, and, basing on the results, to develop recommendations for the use of the methodology in other municipalities in Latvia. The aim of the common efforts is to build up the mutual tolerance and collaborative action for the protection and enhancement of the coastal values of Latvia.



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