

SUCCESS STORY: COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE NORTH LIVONIAN TRANSBOUNDARY RAMSAR SITE

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Cooperation between the Baltic States nature conservation agencies is guided by a number of trilateral or bilateral agreements, some of them signed already more than 15 years ago. However, in practice, the transboundary cooperation takes place in the frame of individual projects or even private initiatives of scientists involved in joint research.

The area along the coast of the Bay of Riga and on the both side of the Latvian-Estonian border is called North Livonia. On the both side of the border there are several protected wetland areas that, though split by national borders, form inseparable ecological units. As result of active transboundary cooperation on the base of thee Ramsar areas (Nigula, Northern Bog, Sookuninga), a North Livonian Transboundary Ramsar site was legally announced here in 2008.

Mutual understanding of co-operation between managers of joint transborder wetland system became accepted by both sides step by step and nowadays has resulted in joint projects. The co-operation between the border nature reserves North- Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve (established 1990) and Nigula Nature Reserve (established 1957) has lasted for some time and was strengthened by the agreement for joint nature conservation management (2000) between the governments of Estonia and Latvia.

One of the more prominent transboundary projects in region has been the “*Integrated Wetland and Forest Management in the Transborder Area of North-Livonia (Estonia-Latvia)*.” The project was implemented to develop joint Transboundary Master Plan for future cooperation. Aforementioned project was followed by the INTERREG IIIA project WETLIVONIA “*Tuned management and monitoring of the transboundary protected areas in North-Livonia as a support for local development*,” which made it possible to initiate many actions planned in the transboundary Master Plan. Activities like planning local infrastructure in PA-s and river habitat restoration, as well as planning and setting up a cross-border monitoring system for the management of transboundary Ramsar areas, including creating facilities for Transboundary Research and Monitoring Centre for future studies in North-Livonia, not only improved the protected area management and cooperation between transboundary sites, but also supported local rural communities.

During the last years, both the Estonian and Latvian nature conservation system has undergone several large scale reforms – instead of single protected areas administration, there is Environmental Board in Estonia and instead of North-Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve Administration, there’s Nature Conservation Agency In Latvia. Due to the administrative changes, the transboundary cooperation is kept alive through different small scale events and initiatives that also support the work done in regional nature conservation agencies.

Political, financial and methodological constraints significantly limit effective transboundary cooperation. However, the stakeholders admitted that regular meetings and information/experience exchange are very useful and needed to meet the common obligations set by the needs from protected area management. Transboundary cooperation is a good tool for changing traditional wetland management approach of protected areas from command & control management to integrated community based adaptive ecosystem management, which is more acceptable by local communities.

References

<http://www.north-livonia.org>

<http://wetlivonia.north-livonia.org>