

ABOUT LOCAL NATURE CONSERVATION TRUSTEES, PUBLIC SERVANTS AND TRUST IN NATURE CONSERVATION

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Do not spit into the old pit, ready for a new pole!

In 1936, when the national system for nature conservation was first established, Estonia had only one nature conservation inspector and 588 unpaid trustees. Contemporary situation is vice versa – there are about 2000 nature conservation officials and perhaps no unpaid trustees. Unfortunately, we have no detailed information on the conservation officials.

In 1930s, 70% of the confirmed nature conservation trustees were school teachers, 17% of them were foresters educated in forestry and 13% were local activists.

The nature conservation trustees had to promote nature conservation in local communities in mode that the question of nature conservation should not be official demand, but natural obligation. Just in the same way as it has been through ages, while preserving sacred groves, stones etc.

The trustees were recommended to create nature conservation study circles among pupils and to organize study trips to nature conservation objects, where they had to talk about the importance of nature conservation. They also had to organise the Nature Conservation Days in their communities and to hold speeches about nature conservation. The trustees from forestry were recommended to involve other foresters in searching for possible conservation objects in order to monitor these objects and areas. [2]

We can find officials, dealing with nature conservation in 2010, from different institutions:

- 1) Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation Department
- 2) Environmental Inspectorate
- 3) Environmental Board
- 4) Local Municipalities
- 5) The State Forest Management Centre

It is impossible to get exact data neither from Ministry of Environment nor elsewhere on the number of nature conservation officials and on the amount of money we spend to keep them active. SEI has lately carried out a survey which shows that most of the time the nature conservation officials are engaged in paper work and work with databases. The officials have been working in the system, in average, less than 5 years. [2] It is necessary to invite experienced nature experts to help with the teaching of young officials. Permanent reforming of the nature conservation system has resulted in permanent changes in the posts. Most of the nature conservation trustees are nowadays replaced with nature conservation NGO-s, there are more than 1000 of them. Quite often, the same people are members of 10 NGO-s, the network of organisations does not cover all Estonia. The NGO-s are also dependent on national funding and drown in meaningless paper work.

The existing nature conservation system makes Estonian natural values vulnerable. Frequently, the nature is conserved only in papers; our legislation gives often the developers rights to damage nature values. For example, Nabala lime stone area has got more than 50 000 signatures for protection, but the law gives a developer right for mining.

The reason for reaching the dead-end in nature conservation lies perhaps also in the system's ambition to regulate and control everything with no regard to real needs, resources, people with knowledge etc.

What we should do:

- 1) The nature conservation control should be delegated on community level. Environmental Inspectorate has to be reshaped from punishing institution into anticipatory and supporting tool for nature conservation. Often, local people estimate the situation more appropriately than the officials who drive to the place from city. We should think about restoring the system of nature conservation trustees in order to create a motivation system for them and decentralise it.
- 2) Nature Conservation has to become real. It embraces all our surroundings, not only untouched nature and protected areas. We have to stop talking about natural selection and about our incapacity to preserve nature from the results of human activities.
- 3) Our state has to reassess our international obligations, as well as assess our financial funds and people for nature conservation.

We should start with the development plan for TRUST.

References

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