

Methodological basis for decision making of administration bodies in the field of tourism

Jiri Husek, Ondrej Vitek¹

Keywords: protected areas, management, administration

The Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection of the Czech Republic (ANCLP) is a state organisation controlled directly by the Ministry of Environment. ANCLP is responsible for, among others, is the state administration of 24 protected landscape areas (PLA) in the Czech Republic. Tourism and sports are a common topic, which is represented in practical conservation of areas and species more and more in the last years (e. g. Eagles, McCool & Haynes, 2002). To prevent negative impacts on endangered species, other natural phenomena, and especially on protected areas, principles of sustainable tourism have started to be used (e. g. Stevens, 2002; Höhn, 2004). For the elimination of dissimilarities in decision making of all 24 PLA authorities, the Board of specialists was established at ANCLP in 2005. Such unification should be provided mainly by the publication of methodologies. Separate analysis and methodology is created for each considerable activity, e. g. cycling, climbing, skiing etc., but a common background of this work is given in this paper. Recommendations in using juristic instruments are specific for national laws, therefore mainly specialist issues are discussed. The objective of this article is to share an experience with decision making in tourism issues and encourage discussion about such approach.

One of the most important principles to ensure objective decision making is to get a personal experience with the assessed activity. It is not necessary that the official must experience it directly, a good friend can be helpful, too. Best professionals in nature conservation, but with no experience in for example, mountain climbing, tend to eliminate this activity from all protected areas just because of making noise, enhancing soil and rock erosion and disturbing falcons which would nest somewhere in the rocks. With practical experience, the official knows that climbers are more sensitive to conservation issues than the average population; they can record findings of species and can personally protect the rock where falcon's nest was found. On the other hand, a conservationist who is keen on downhill skiing, could neglect fatal changes in water regime appended to artificial snowing or deforestation in mountain ecosystems.

Preliminary cautiousness is a very helpful but overused instrument. Administrative bodies use it often in cases where no evidence of the negative effect of some activity is recorded, but where they nevertheless want to prevent it. If preliminary cautiousness is the only considerable reason, prevention of an activity should be always temporary and parallel research should be started to make potential effects evident.

Awareness of research outputs is necessary for providing objectivity as well (e. g. Tilders, 2009). Although officials have a lack of time for reading papers when they must make decisions before their deadlines, many research projects give very clear data useful for nature conservation. Sometimes the research conclusions oppose groovy knowledge with evidence, but have limited possibilities to reach officials in state administration. Spreading and sharing information is thus an important topic for head-officers.

For providing public acceptance of restrictions, reasons must be carefully given for each of them. In practise, authorities are empowered by law forbid activities when they can. But without giving clear reasons why it is necessary, public opinion remains unchanged or even gets unfriendly and the restrictions are not observed.

¹ Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection of the Czech Republic, Nuselska 39, 140 00 Praha 4, Czech Republic, ondrej.vitek@nature.cz

The provided space is not enough to present all principles and recommendations which are discussed in ANCLP Methodological Papers. The bad news is, that as in internal document it is written in Czech and is not planned to be translated. But it is useful for authorities in the Czech Republic. Such methodological recommendations published provide useful instructions for a decision making process to raise its quality within a wide spectrum of administrative bodies, which could hardly have specialists for all the topics related to tourism. A good result is also in providing contact with specialists for environmental issues in various activities within tourism and encouraging these specialists to obtain better knowledge and experience in their field of work.

References

- Eagles, P. J. F.; McCool, S. F.; Haynes, Ch. D. (2002): Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas: Guidelines for Planning and Management. UNEP/IUCN (World Commission on Protected Areas)/WTO, Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 8, 183 p., 175 p.
- Höhn, S. (2004): Other Networking Initiatives in Europe. Workshop: Presentation of Viabono for Central and Eastern European countries, Vilm.
- Stevens, T. (2002): Sustainable Tourism in National Parks and Protected Areas: an Overview. Case Studies. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report F01NC04, 49 p.
- Tilders, I. (2009): A European Open Standard for the Practise of Adaptive Site Management. 2nd European Congress on Conservation Biology, Prague.