

# The definition of visitor product in Special Nature Reserve “Obedska bara”

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The Special Nature Reserve “Obedska bara”, located near the river Sava, is the oldest protected area in Serbia. Its protection has started in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, during the Austro-Hungarian Empire, when it was a protected hunting area. Since 1994, Serbia has designated “Obedska bara” the special nature reserve, the first protection category of exceptional significance for Republic of Serbia. This protected area covers 9.820 ha and the protection regime consists of the strict regime on 3,2 %, limited regime on 26,1% and sustainable development regime with allowed use of forest resources on 70,7% (the wise use). The Special Nature Reserve “Obedska bara” obtained its international status: Ramsar site since 1977, Important Bird Area since 1989 and Important Plant Area since 2005. The activities on restoration of wetland ecosystems started upon designation.

The situation in Serbia has been quite hard during the past decades and it has influenced the visits to Serbian protected areas, including “Obedska bara”. A few excursions per year and some anglers did not satisfy the needs and plans the reserve’s manager Public Enterprise “Vojvodinašume”. In the past three years, a lot of work has been done by the Public Enterprise “Vojvodinašume”, supported by the Provincial Secretariat of Urbanism, Building and Environmental protection in a bigger extent, and by Ministry of Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning in a smaller extent. The idea was to arrange the area of “Obedska bara” and several projects have been implemented by the reserve’s manager in the last three years, including;

## Activities on restoration

- Revitalization of wetlands on 300 ha every year – chopping down the ground vegetation mechanically
- Building one bird island
- Building two elliptical water bodies and widening later the two water bodies for 6 m, and deepening for 1 m
- Cleaning of waste
- Cleaning on 6 micro locations
- Cleaning and spreading the main canal linking the bank with the “Obreško okno” pond

- Cleaning other canals of sludge and mud in 3.000 m
- Cleaning canal “Jasenska-Belilo” from sludge and mud in the length of 1.000 m
- Restoration of the park “Obedska bara” in a small replica of the Special Nature Reserve “Obedska bara” (cutting old trees and planting new 58 ones, setting the path in the length of 800 m, wooden fence in the length of 150 m, the entrance gate, building 14 fireboxes, 16 tables, 32 benches, 10 baskets, info board etc.)

## Activities on infrastructure

- Building the educational center
- Building four watchtowers for monitoring
- Building two wooden bridges (50 m and 15 m length)
- Building and marking the educational path in 7 km length
- Building (cleaning of bushes and branches) and marking the walking path in 6 km length

## Activities on equipment

- Building three educational points (eaves, tables, benches, info tables etc.)
- Purchase a tourist boat (catamaran) and two out-board motors
- Purchase of two motor cleaners
- Purchase of 16 wooden boats
- Printing 2.500 educational tourist maps

As a result of these efforts, the visitors have come back to the protected areas generally, and in case of the Special Nature Reserve “Obedska bara”, it meant 12.000 visitors in the last year. Furthermore, the bird populations have tripled in Obedska bara, e.g. colony has increased from 3 species to 7 and number of pairs in colony from 250 to 750. If our expectations are fulfilled, we will have more visitors in the future and better conditions for protecting biodiversity in “Obedska bara”.



Figure 1. The watchtower "Kula Obeda"