

Outdoor Activities in Nature and Landscape – Practice-Oriented Solutions

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Introduction

Outdoor activities belong to our everyday life. Although outdoor activities providing enjoyment of nature are in rising demand and have a positive influence on our health and well-being they can also lead to conflicts with nature and landscape. There is a lot of effort put into finding out how to perform outdoor activities and at the same time avoid or minimise negative impacts on nature and landscape.

There are different solutions and strategies available to resolve problems between outdoor activities and environmentally sensitive areas. They range from legal prohibitions, zoning, blocking sensitive areas, pleas, information strategies, incentive-based strategies up to voluntary agreements between sports associations and nature conservation. However, it has to be considered that these strategies often are of theoretical character. The question whether the strategies are well accepted by the outdoor activists and whether they lead to the intended effects often remains unanswered. Considering these facts the main objective of this project is to evaluate existing strategies and resolutions that have already been applied and tested on site. This will provide a basis for recommendations and indications on how to perform outdoor activities in accordance with the aims of nature and landscape conservation.

Methods

To meet this objective six well-known case studies in Switzerland, applying different conflict resolution strategies, have been evaluated. The examples concerned outdoor activities such

as hiking, freeriding, snowshoeing, paragliding and river-rafting. The goal of the evaluations was to identify success factors and to develop solution-orientated tools and instruments.

The findings of the evaluation are presented in form of a toolbox containing conflict resolution strategies, good practice examples as well as success factors that have proven their usefulness in handling and resolving problems arising between outdoor activities and nature and landscape. The toolbox provides support for authorities, policy-makers and stakeholders dealing with conflicts in this field. The toolbox is part of the internet information system “NaturSportInfo” (www.natursportinfo.de/ch) of the Bundesamt für Naturschutz (Germany) and the Federal Office for the Environment FOEN (Switzerland) and is therefore accessible to a broad audience.

Besides good practice examples and the success factors of conflict resolution, the toolbox emphasizes the role of environmental communication. It points out vehicles and means of communication which can be used to reach target audiences and make sportsmen and -women environmentally conscious and informed. The so-called “communication paths” can be described as follows:

- Internal communication: This means the internal communication of associations or clubs. The target audience can for example be reached by club-journals, club-homepages, excursions for club-members, etc.

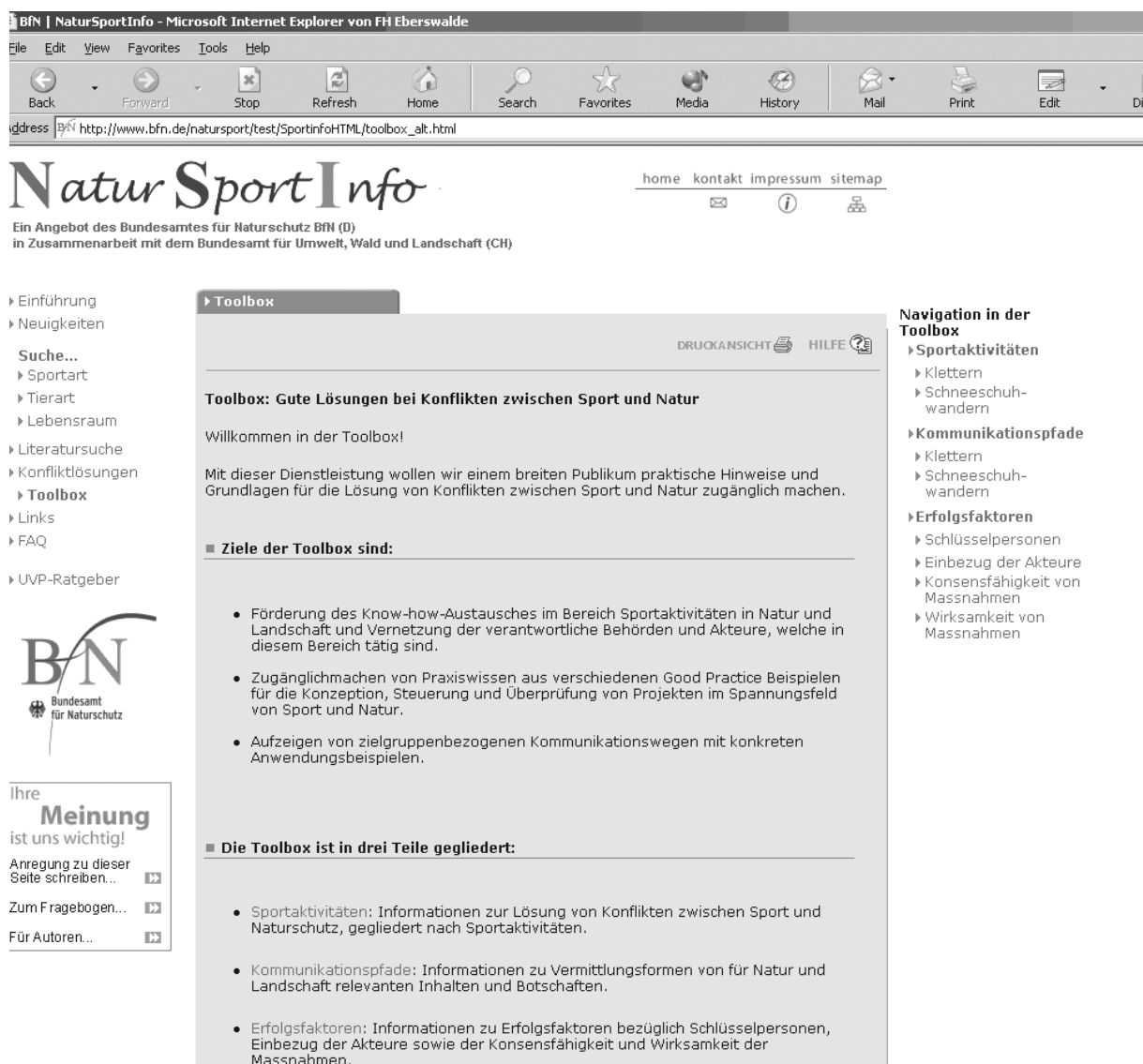


Figure 1: Entrance page to the „Toolbox“ within the website of the NaturSportInfo internet information system.

- Training and further education: Environmental communication can take place in training courses or further education courses for sportsmen and -women or sports-instructors. Furthermore, environmental topics can also be an obligatory part of an examination that is needed to obtain a licence or permission to perform sports activities (e.g. paragliding).
- Commercial events and outdoor trips: On the basis of commercial events and outdoor-trips (for example events or trips of outdoor-companies, sports schools, NGO's) participants can be sensitized to the environment and landscape on site.
- Communication gates: These are the gates that have to be passed by all those performing an outdoor activity. The gates refer to different stages of the activity and can be described as “prearrangement”, “equipment”, “journey and arrival”, “transport and sojourn in the area” as well as “performance of the outdoor activity”.

Results and Discussion

With this project an important contribution has been made to the discussion on how to sensitize sportsmen and sports-women on environmental issues. Working with “communication paths” is a new and promising approach in this field of

research. By emphasizing the “communication gates” particular attention is drawn to athletes not organised in associations. The fact has become apparent that in practice as well as in practice-oriented research, common efforts should be made to improve the accessibility of this target group.

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