

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATURA 2000 NETWORK IN THE FORESTS OF LITHUANIA



Raimundas Peleckas  
Senior officer  
Forest Regeneration and Protection Division  
Directorate General of State Forests under the  
Ministry of Environment  
A.Juozapavicius str. 9, LT-09311 Vilnius  
Lithuania  
phone: +370 5 275 41 08;  
fax: +370 5 273 40 04;  
e-mail: fsc@gmu.lt

### **1. Legislation on NATURA 2000 at national level**

Approximation Lithuania's legislation to the provisions of the EU Directives was implemented before the date of accession (1st of May 2004). The request for transitional period up to 2010 to implement the Directives on Birds and Habitats were not satisfied by EC. Ratification of negotiations documents was implemented by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania in 2001.

State Service of Protected Areas under the Ministry of Environment coordinates activities of institutions implementing the protection and management of the Special Protected Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

As provided by the Law on Protected Areas, the resolution on granting the status of SPA according Birds Directive or SAC according Habitats Directive to the national protected areas or any parts there of is passed by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. In case, when the area is not under protection, the national protected area shall be established and then upon a resolution of the Government an additional status of SPA or SAC is granted to the area.

The provisions of the directives were transferred to the Law on Protected Areas and related secondary legislation.

By the resolutions of the Lithuanian Republic Government in 2004, the following issues have been approved: 1) General regulations of territories important for conservation of birds and natural habitats (SPAs and SACs); 2) List of protected territories of the Republic of Lithuania of any parts there of containing areas important for conservation of birds (SPAs).

In 2001-2004 the Ministry of Environment has approved: 1) Selection criteria for the territories important for conservation of birds (national criteria elaborated by Bird Life International: number of individuals or pairs, minimal number of breed pairs, minimal number of individuals, etc.); 2) Selection criteria for the territories important for conservation of natural habitats (specific criteria for forest habitats - the main level trees age and minimal habitat size); 3) Monitoring programs for SPAs and SACs (main parameters and monitoring rhythm are settled); 4) List of the proposed Sites of Community Importance prepared and together with relevant database submitted to the European Commission.

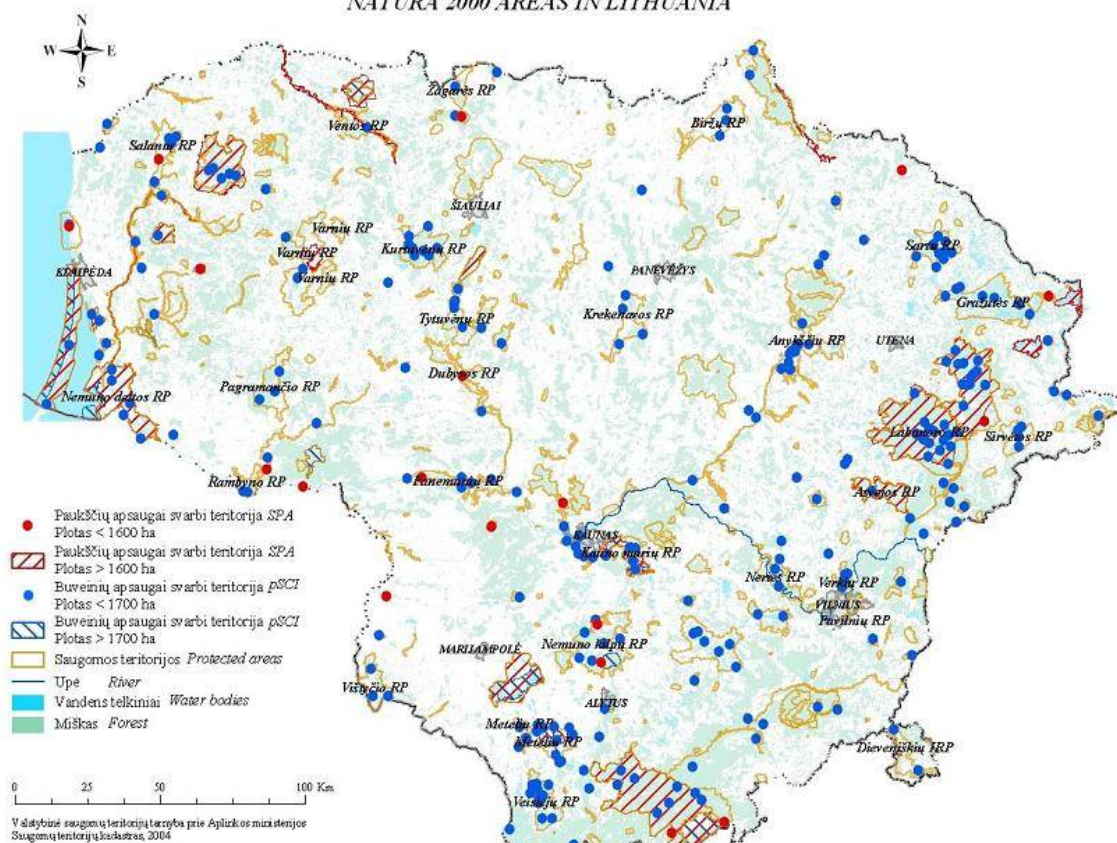
### **2. Overview of the NATURA 2000 Network**

The total forest area in NATURA 2000 Network is 491 thousand ha.

It is considered, that distribution of the NATURA 2000 Network in the forests territories according property rights corresponds to distribution of the total forest area in the country according property rights. At present 49.8 % of all Lithuanian forests are of state importance, 17.5 % - forests reserved for restitution, 32.7 % - private forests.



NATURA 2000 TINKLO TERITORIJOS LIETUVOJE  
NATURA 2000 AREAS IN LITHUANIA



**2.1. Overview: territories important for conservation of birds**

Selection of potential SPAs according assigned criteria and their establishment is being implemented since 2003. 77 (from 79 foreseen) territories were approved in 2004-2005, the total area of them is 541 thousand ha or 8.2 % of Republic territory; SPAs consist of 301 thousand ha in the forests.

In all newly established SPAs specific restrictions for forest management were introduced: various zones important for birds protection was determined (e.g. breeding, feeding, sleeping, intensive migration places, etc.). In existing protected areas, which were nominated as SPAs, specific restrictions will be introduced gradually through management plans.

In the near future strengthening measures for conservation of birds should be implemented (improvement of juridical documents, management plans, etc.).

**2.2. Overview: territories important for conservation of natural habitats or species**

Selection of territories according assigned criteria is being performed. The whole Lithuania’s territory is considered to be in Boreal biogeographical region.

The list of proposed Sites of Community Importance (pSCI) was approved by the Minister of Environment and submitted to EC. The pSCIs list comprises 266 territories; the total area is 649 thousand ha or 10 % of Republic territory; in 120 sites of 39 thousand ha there are natural forest habitats.

The pSCIs list was evaluated by EC in biogeographical seminar held in Lilaste, Latvia (2005-12). Selection of additional sites must be performed, and the list must be improved according recommendations of biogeographical seminar. EC has intention to approve first part of pSCIs list of Boreal region in the end of 2006 or beginning of 2007. After that approval during 6 years special areas of conservation in proposed sites must be established.

The values and current conservation status in territories from potential list must be preserved (maintained or restored) until these territories will get the status of protected areas.

**Forest habitat types and areas to be protected under Directive 92/43/EEB  
(on current pSCI list) and decisions of biogeographical seminar**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Forest habitat type</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>EC decision</b>
2180	Wooded dunes	515 ha	SUF
9010	Western taiga	7543 ha	IN MOD
9020	Old broad-leaved deciduous and mixed forests	2097 ha	IN MOD
9050	Fenn. herb-rich forests with <i>Picea abies</i>	1178 ha	Scient. res.
9060	Coniferous forests on, or connected to, eskers	-	Scient. res.
9070	Fenn. wooded pastures (together with 6530 Fenn. Wooded meadows)	93 ha	IN MOD
9080	Fenn. deciduous swamp woods	3619 ha	IN MOD
9160	Oak or oak-hornbeam forests of the <i>Carpinus betuli</i>	4252 ha	IN MOD
9180	Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines	760 ha	IN MOD
9190	Oak woods with <i>Quercus robur</i> on sandy plains	187 ha	Scient. res.
91D0	Bog woodland	17010 ha	IN MIN
91E0	Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	1573 ha	IN MOD
91F0	Riparian mixed forests along the great rivers	105 ha	SUF
91T0	Central European lichen scots pine forests	500 ha	Scient. res.
Total:		39 430 ha	

**3. General restrictions of forest management in NATURA 2000 sites**

The general regulations important for protection territories of habitats and birds, approved by Government of Lithuanian Republic: describes, how conservation regime for each species or habitat must be formed; lays the provision, that protection and management regime should help keep or restore favourable conservation status of natural habitats and species in NATURA 2000 sites; protective provisions for each species and habitats have to be adapted to concrete locality conditions and peculiarities (e.g. composition of species and habitats), the concrete measures should be applied by preparing individual regulations, forest management plans or other planning documents for NATURA 2000 sites.

**3.1. Restrictions of forest management in protected for birds areas (SPAs)**

In territories important for conservation of birds (SPAs), it is promoted to use forestry methods as foreseen in the planning documents of protected areas to sustain appropriate condition of habitats. During period of 2004-2005, 26 biosphere polygons were been established and nominated as SPAs for protection of birds. According decisions of the Ministry of Environment special forest use regulations in these areas were set.

Examples of restrictions in the forest SPAs are: restricted afforestation; limited visiting or transporting during some months; prohibited final felling in certain plots; limited time for other felling; prohibited change of use of forestland; restricted drainage and other change of hydrological regime; prohibited planting of alien species of trees and bushes; set minimum number of biodiversity trees to leave in clear felling areas.

**3.2. Restrictions of forest management in forest habitats of European interest**

For the protection of forest habitats, the following (most often) restrictions are foreseen: to destroy forest litter, cover of herbage, moss, lichen or shrub; to remove nascent dead wood, plant forest or mechanically prepare the soil in plots damaged by fire – for 9010 Western taiga; forest cuttings, except in places, where it is needed to prevent spread of pests and in other places determined by protected areas and forest management planning documents; to exploit mineral resources; to change hydrological regime, except measures determined by protected areas planning documents; to use fertilizers. Some promotion measures may be recommended: not to use



pesticides; the carry out measures which are necessary to maintain characteristic forest stands species composition and vertical structure; to cut of part of spruces from the main level in 9160 Hornbeam forests.

#### **4. Financial support on forest management in NATURA 2000 areas**

##### **4.1. Current financial instruments:**

1) LIFE – NATURE program (until the end of 2006): it is administered by EC; support for big projects is foreseen; in 2005 3 projects in Lithuania were approved, but not for forests areas management.

2) Structural Funds (ERDF) through Single Programming Document: the measures for management plans of Lithuanian protected areas are foreseen; management plans on NATURA 2000 areas are being prepared by non-governmental organizations mainly.

3) Environmental Protection Support Program.

4) Municipalities' Special Environmental Protection Support Program.

##### **4.2. New (perspective) financial instruments:**

1) European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development - support for NATURA 2000 territories: it is being discussed to foresee the payments just for private forest owners or their associations; the payments consist of compensations in Natura 2000 sites and payments to support active management of the habitats; in case of support of active management the maximum support can be 0.1 Million EUR / project.

2) Draft LIFE+ regulation: one of the 3 components is called LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity; the priority is set for Nature 2000 network monitoring and management; the provisional annual budget for Lithuania may consist of about 2.5 million EUR.

#### **5. The main problems caused by forest management in NATURA 2000 site of Lithuania**

1) Establishment of NATURA 2000 management requirements for the forests was started to implement without qualified and experienced forest specialists.

2) There still exists the absence of clear normative acts and lack of forest scientist suggestions, how to maintain unchanged values in forest habitats.

3) Ornithologists have the big authority and influence on decision making process related to NATURA 2000 legislation. Their prepared management planning documents are too tendentious in environmental point of view, irresponsible and with low quality.

4) Still existing opinion “the best conservation regime is to do nothing at all” does not solve the problem even in ecological respect, it does not contribute to sustain and balanced forest management.

5) The public information about NATURA 2000 network is limited or there is a doubt of its reliability.

#### **6. Conclusions**

State forest managers feel the costs (losses) incurred due to application of restrictions in the protected areas. But there is no direct compensation mechanism for the development of the NATURA 2000 for state forest managers - despite the fact, that these areas are concentrated (predominant) in state owned property forests.

At present the only way for state forest managers to seek for achievement of the balance of economical, social and ecological forest functions and to defend their positions is active and motivated participation in public consideration, which is the obligatory phase in the establishment process of protected areas.

