

# The Continuum Project

March '08 Newsletter

## The Continuum Project

### Financed by the Swiss MAVA Foundation for Nature

In June 2007 ALPARC, CIPRA, ISCAR, and WWF have initiated a 19-month project to lay the foundations for the long-term implementation of a coherent ecological network in the Alps. A joint alpine set of methodologies for connecting important areas and a catalogue of possible measures to enhance connectivity will be developed. In addition, four pilot regions were chosen across the Alpine arc to carry out first concrete implementation actions by 2009. These activities will include, for example, zoning measures, protected area enlargement based on the needs of ecological systems, creation of ecological corridors and sustainable use agreements with far-

mers, foresters, hunters or tourism operators. One crucial part of the efforts is to be seen in informing decision makers at the local, regional, national and international level on the importance of the ecological continuum. This is to be seen as a pre-condition for considering biodiversity aspects appropriately in planning and policy decisions. For this, also a profound and coherent communication strategy is prepared. Ultimately, the Continuum Project will provide the foundation for the work of the Platform "Ecological Network" of the Alpine Convention to further develop regional and cross-boundary connectivity projects within the Alps.

## Completed activities

### Evaluation of approaches for establishing ecological networks

In a first step the Continuum Project evaluated and assessed methodological approaches currently used or proposed for establishing ecological networks. Four approaches – the Pan-European Ecological Network approach (PEEN), the Swiss Ecological Network (REN), The Ecoregion approach by WWF, the Protected Area approach by ALPARC – have been assessed by 16 experts (scientists and members of the Platform Ecological Network) following a questionnaire. The suitability of the 4 approaches differs clearly regarding aims, scale, data need and implementation. The results of the expert assessment have been verified in a workshop on December 10-11, 2007 in Zurich (Switzerland) and recommendations on priorities (where ecological networks are most needed), on the methodology (what are the most appropriate approaches regarding different goals) and on the procedure (how to develop regional projects on ecologi-



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cal networks) have been developed. All recommendations will be summarized in an assessment report and can be seen on the webpage of the Ecological Network in the Alps: <http://www.alpine-ecological-network.org> by the end of March.



# Making it happen

Pilot regions were chosen to represent the ecological, territorial and socio-economic realities of different Alpine countries based on their positive attitude towards the creation of ecological networks. Indeed, ecological networks activities have already begun in some pilot regions. First contacts were made in order to group all these activities into an Alpine ecological continuum.

## Pilot region 1

### ***The Berchtesgaden – Salzburg cross-boundary region***

Located along the German-Austrian border and involving the federal states of Bavaria (Germany) and Salzburg (Austria), the region contains several protected areas (National Park Berchtesgaden, Nature reserves Tennenengebirge, Hagengebirge, Salzburger Kalkhochalpen, Natura 2000 sites...). Many cross-boundary cooperation projects in a variety of fields (date exchange, scientific research...) exist. As the area is of great natural interest and part of one bio-geographical entity, this cooperation should now be extended.

## Pilot region 2

### ***The French department Isère***

The Isère *département* is located in the French region Rhône-Alpes. It is an intensely anthropized area presenting a strong need for rapid intervention to prevent continuous settlement from Valence to Geneva. The valleys of this region are main migration routes of pan-alpine significance, especially for birds. They are however of great importance also for local migrations of individual species between the regional massifs and the main large protected areas (National Park Les Ecrins, Nature Parks Vercors, Chartreuse, Bauges).

The Département Isère has been working on ecological networks since 1996. In 2001, a map of all ecological networks of the region was produced. Since then, various activities have been undertaken to implement these ecological networks (game bridges and tunnels, speed limits, public relations work, integration in planning processes). Isère now aims to integrate its actions in the larger Alpine frame provided by the Ecological Continuum Project. Their experience will be extremely important and all future Alpine projects will benefit from their knowledge.

“*The Pilot Regions are the first pieces in the puzzle of Alpine ecological networks*”

## Pilot region 3

### ***The Eastern Austrian region around the National Park Kalkalpen and the National Park Gesäuse***

Three federal states and various protected areas are concerned. Based on the results of the 2004 ALPARC study, the National Parks Kalkalpen and Gesäuse and other protected areas have initiated the establishment of an ecological network. Due to its characteristics (large forest cover, small cultural landscape structures, low fragmentation, high biodiversity), the region is perfectly suited for the project. The area is also an important link to other Alpine regions and the Carpathians. In October 2006 a first workshop, with the joint signing of a declaration of intent, laid the foundations for this project.

## Pilot region 4

### ***Engadin – Alto Adige - Valle dell'Adige (Grisons – South Tyrol – Trentino)***

This pilot region will consider connectivity in two areas. First along the Adige River valley from the Po plain to the central Alps and the Inn valley (crossing migration routes from South and East). The Adige valley is densely populated and intensively used by irrigated agriculture and connectivity is of main concern for nature protection. Secondly along existing protected areas: Adamello Brenta – Stelvio – Swiss National Park and from the Nature Parks in South Tyrol to the National Park Hohe Tauern in Austria. For these protected areas a main concern is to establish (transboundary) ecological networks to assure biological exchange and large migration areas (e.g. for brown bear).



## First pilot regions workshop

14 -15 April 2008, Chambéry (France)

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Representatives of the four pilot regions and other key areas are invited to the official presentation of the Continuum Project. An opportunity to exchange experiences on the implementation of ecological networks.

The results and recommendations of the December 2007 experts workshop will be discussed. The main focus of the meeting however will be on the first draft of a catalogue of measures, a document outlining the measures existing in the different Alpine countries and that can possibly contribute to the creation of ecological networks. Participants are welcome to complement the catalogue, to evaluate it and to assess the feasibility of the proposed measures.

## Alpine ecological networks get visible

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The Ecological Continuum project and the Platform Ecological Network of the Alpine Convention present their joint activities to all stakeholders and interested persons.

The website [www.alpine-ecological-network.org](http://www.alpine-ecological-network.org) will give information on initiatives dealing with the creation of ecological networks in the Alps, in particular on the Ecological Continuum project and on the Platform Ecological Networks. These two initiatives will use the reserved section of the web site as a working platform. News, projects, experts, events, publications (in different languages), links and documents will be made available to the interested public.

In spring 2008 a common brochure will be published explaining issues and initiatives to all concerned stakeholders. It will be printed in English, German, French, Italian and Slovenian. An online version will be made available on the project's website.

A side event on ecological networks will take place at the 9th meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP9 CBD) in May 2008. Among other activities a Memorandum of Understanding between the Alpine Convention, the Carpathian Convention and the CBD will be signed.

## New European publications on ecological networks

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“The Pan-European Ecological Network: taking stock” looks at the implementation of PEEN in the 55 concerned states (available in English and French).

[http://book.coe.int/EN/catalogue.php?PAGEID=43&lang=EN&theme\\_catalogue=100039](http://book.coe.int/EN/catalogue.php?PAGEID=43&lang=EN&theme_catalogue=100039)

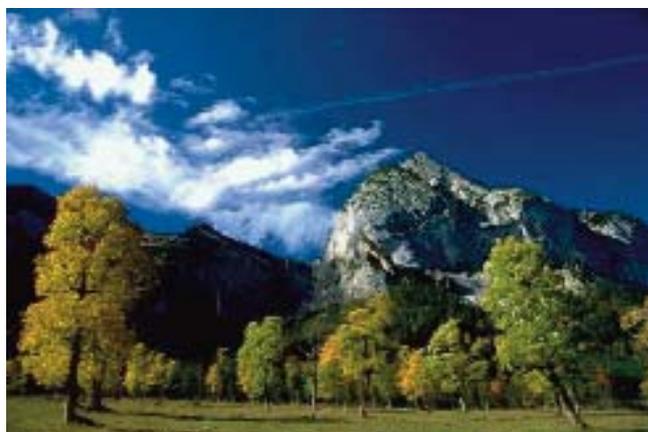
A technical report describes “**The indicative map of the Pan-European Ecological Network in Western Europe**”. The Alps are also considered in this study, but the scale does not allow detailed information on PEEN relevant sites in Alpine countries.

<http://de.scientificcommons.org/21280974>

## New initiatives on ecological networks

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The Platform Ecological Network of the Alpine Convention and the four partners of the Continuum project submitted a project proposal for the implementation of ecological networks in the Alps to the EU in the frame of Alpine Space 2007-2013. Fifteen partners such as national and regional administrations, research institutions, protected areas and NGOs would carry out the project together. Topics such as data management, an ecological barrier analysis, legal aspects and the implementation in pilot areas are foreseen. If approved, the project will start this summer.



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