

6th Internal Newsletter

DANUBEparksCONNECTED

REPORT ON FOREST STUDY VISITS IN DANUBE RIPARIAN FOREST CORRIDOR

General approach

Defined in the Application Form of DANUBEparksCONNECTED as an activity 6.4.1 and 6.4.2, PE Vojvodinašume by the end of 2017 started the discussion on forest study visits.

With an aim to bring PAs and forest enterprises together to visit best practice management, as well as to identify deficits in the Danube riparian forest corridor, three study visits were organized for the Upper, Middle and Lower Danube during 2018. Starting from the Upper Danube at end of February, through visiting the middle Danube in April and finally visiting the Lower Danube in November study visits were brought to the ground.

Vojvodinašume as a responsible partner for this activity with a great support from project partners started the preparation of each study visit. The general setting for each visit was defined with partners that were interested to host the visit. The idea was to connect a few partners in neighbouring regions and to organize a unique visit.

1st study visit (HU-SKV)

Having general settings in mind a first study tour was organised in Hungary and Slovakia. Despite the fact that Hungary and Slovakia are situated in the middle course of the Danube, project partners NP Fertő-Hanság and BROZ were interested to host the 1st study tour in the Upper Danube (26.02-01.03.2018). Neither the extreme weather conditions, manifesting by frozen days with average temperature of -18°C, participants of this study tour had a great experience in the biggest inner Danube Delta – Szigetköz and Slovakian Velky Lel island.



This study tour was supported also by the institutions that are not project partners, Hungarian Forest Research institute and Gemenc Forest Enterprise. Besides the field visits, the study tour had an official meeting part where indicators of Danube forest corridors were discussed. One of the interested parts, that was discussed was climate change problems and possible solutions in forestry, possibilities of reintroducing of native tree-stands in forestry

management-practice in Szigetköz Landscape Protected Area, gene reservoir of native forestry tree species in the area of Gemenc Forestry Company and good practice in forestry management linking to the natural forest-stands in Slovakian Danube riverside forests as well as in Upper Serbian Danube riverside forests.

Field trips and on-site visits of WP6 Pilot Action were organized by Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate in Szigetköz Landscape Protected Area. Main topic was, habitat/stand conditions for different poplar clones, successful breeding of black poplar on the stand with grey willow (*Salix cinerea*).

The visit to the Slovakian Velky Lel island close to Komarno city brought into focus small but very effective activities on riverside area in Slovakia, Velky Lel Island - with the examples of oak afforestation, grasslands and river branch restoration actions by Slovakian partner BROZ.

2nd study visit (SRB-CRO-HU)

The second study tour was held in April (25-27.04.2018) and covered visits to three protected areas in tree countries: SNR Gornje Podunavlje (Serbia), NP Kopacki Rit (Croatia) and NP Danube Drava (Hungary).

Beside DANUBEparksCONNECTED partners, on this study tour joined partners from Interreg Project coop MDD (DTP1-1-259-2.3) who at the same time had a project meeting in Sombor. PE Vojvodinašume is partner in both projects. One goal of coop MDD is to harmonize the management within the area of the future 5 country Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube (TBR MDD).



Similar to the 1st study tour, besides site visits the 2nd study tour brought into attention the working part with discussion on forest corridor map development, milestones of work package implementation, presentation of the indicators of forest corridors as well as results of the GIS analysis of the forest corridor status along the Danube. Topic of the map elaboration and further analysis of the forest corridor connecting indicators was also discussed in Sombor during the Middle Danube study visit.

All three protected areas were visited with different topics: site visit to SNR Gornje Podunavlje showed experience of PE Vojvodinašume in afforestation of native species (white poplar and oak) through visiting of project pilot area in Apatin part of the reserve; visit to NP Kopački rit brought focus on natural

growing forests without any interventions; while the visit to NP Danube-Drava showed experience in bats monitoring.

3rd study visit (BG-ROM)

Experience from the first two study visits confirm that the experience exchange among partners fosters the coherence in their management practices. This was also the case with 3rd study visit organized in the Lower Danube in November (05-09.11.2018) in Bulgaria and Romania. The host of the last study visit was NP Persina and BR Danube Delta but also supported by Romanian Romsilva Forestry Enterprise.



The site visit of Persina NP shows a way of invasive species management (especially *Amorpha fruticosa*) but also afforestation with oak species. Visiting of different Danube Delta sites shows not so standardize vegetative way of renewing of white willow, afforestation with white poplar as well as preservation of remaining ancient old oak trees.

Conclusions & lessons learnt

At the end, Vojvodinašume expresses great gratitude to all partners who supported the organization and successful implementation of all three study visits.

The study visits justified the set main objectives and brought together foresters and PA staff to jointly explore the Danube as a Riparian Forest Corridor. By this study visits they widened the common horizon through visiting good practice examples in other Danube areas.

For PE Vojvodinašume as a partner who participated in all three study visits, and as a partner which is quite different from other project partners in the sense of having a double role at the same time – market oriented forest management authority and manager of protected areas, this was a unique experience since that, we had a chance to see also a sustainable small-scale forestry activities: successful vegetative renewing of native species (e.g. white willow), renewing of important gene species (black poplar), intensive invasive management practices and more. These positive examples can serve as base for the connection of missing “green” parks along the Danube in order to provide a continual forest corridor.

At the end many partners found a joint understanding for follow-up activities within the Danube Habitat Corridor.