

## National Park Certificate for Alpine Pastures

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### Keywords

National Park Certificate, Alpine Pasture, Natura 2000, Measures, Implementation

### Introduction

Alpine pastures (alps) with National Park Certificate are an exemplary synergy between nature protection and alpine land-use. Large areas of the Hohe Tauern National Park are used as mountain pastures. Here there is a great need for protection of a high biodiversity, especially in relation to climate change and the associated effects: shift of vegetation zones and downward changes in plant species composition.

The establishment of the National Park Certificate allows the achievement of multiple objectives within a single project. At the National Park Hohe Tauern (Tyrol) such objectives were represented by:

1. the preservation and improvement of FFH habitats through measures set by the alpine farmers on a voluntary basis
2. classification of the conservation status of the FFH habitats found in the participating pastures, documentation and improvement of their conservation status during sites inspections
3. alpine pasture management adaptation to local conditions and ecologically compatible with the National Park
4. measures to steer tourist along pre-defined trails and paths
5. recognition of the National Park as the main authority in charge of solving alpine pasture farmers issues (i.e. pasture management or building measures)

### Methods

The National Park Certificate of pastures is based on a joint visit of the alp by staff of the Hohe Tauern National Park and the eb&p Environmental Agency Ltd. together with the alpine pasture farmer. During this joint visit, the pasture will be thoroughly screened. All concerns of farmers are documented and current pasture management is screened. Existing basic data such as bog mapping in Hohe Tauern National Park (WITTMANN et al. 2007) and the mapping of the FFH habitats (HOFFERT et al. 2006) are a valuable basis for recommendations for pasture management and necessary measures. As part of the site inspection, all necessary measures are documented. In accordance with the Conservation Plan on the Alpine Pasture (AIGNER et al. 2007, AIGNER 2004, AIGNER et al. 2003, AIGNER et al. 2005 and EGGER et al. 2006), the measures are defined in detail and calculated.



Picture 1: All measures are agreed in cooperation with the alpine farmers.

The implementation of the agreed measures is carried out by the alpine pasture farmers or by the "Maschinenring". In the implementation phase, the alpine pasture farmers are intensively supervised by staff of the Hohe Tauern Tyrol National Park and the eb&p Environment Agency Ltd.. Once a year, the implemented measures are evaluated and accounted.

## Results

Currently, 26 alps, corresponding to approximately one third of the whole alps present in the Park, are taking part in the program.

In total the FFH habitats conservation status was improved or initiated in approximately 100 hectares. Many other measures with have been set the goal of increasing biodiversity in the National Park (e.g. habitat protection or establishment of stone-walls, revitalization of mountain meadows). Further advantage of the implemented standardized certification methodology is the possibility of evaluating the future development of the FFH habitats at any time.

In the first five-year project period around € 600,000 were granted by the federal land and the European Union.



Picture 2: The recovery of valuable grazing land is performed with care and the goal of enhancing the landscape complexity.



Picture 3: Stone walls have been restored with a total length of 1,340 m .

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