



Green Belt goes Baltic: Closing the Gap between Central Europe and Fennoscandia



Wustrow peninsula at the German Baltic Sea Coast - an example of former military areas at the coast still closed to the public today (Photo: S. Maack)



Students exploring the shifting sand dunes on the Curonian Spit, protected in a Lithuanian national park (Photo: M. Schultz)



Information tours in Latvian former military sites can serve to use both cultural and natural heritage for sustainable economical activities. (Photo: Lauku Celotajs)

The Green Belt Vision:

To create the backbone of an ecological network, running from the Barents to the Black Sea that is a global symbol for transboundary cooperation in nature conservation and sustainable development.

Young people in the southern and eastern Baltic Sea countries today can hardly understand why only two decades ago people were allowed to visit only designated beaches, why gigantic spot lights lit the beaches at night, why the Latvian shoreline was literally combed every day or why peninsulas were turned into mine fields in Germany.

Since those times, these coasts have experienced a tremendous boom in building and development – largely not following the rules of sustainable development. An increasing demand for space for uses such as tourism, harbour and marina development, sand extraction, and power constructions conflicts seriously with nature conservation efforts. At the same time, European Directives such as NATURA 2000, the Water Framework Directive, the recommendations for and evaluation of integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) and the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Directive have already or will trigger a number of national legal acts which can support future conservation of the Baltic Sea coast. However, these top-down activities need to be accompanied by bottom-up initiatives for full implementation in society. This is where the Baltic Green Belt sets in.

For years the map showing the European Green Belt's path from the Barents Sea to the Adriatic and Black Seas has been blemished by a dashed line running along the south-eastern Baltic Sea from Lübeck in Germany up to the Gulf of Finland. There were two reasons for this gap: first of all, only a few scattered and uncoordinated Green Belt activities took place in the countries formerly bordering the iron curtain in the Baltic Sea region; secondly, there was an ongoing discussion about an unsolved question - Where is the Green Belt in the Baltic region located?

Some argued that the iron curtain followed the outer borders of the Soviet Union's Exclusive Economic Zone, and thus the Green Belt was to be a fully marine area in the middle of the sea. Others pointed out that the typical feature of the Green Belt – areas of formerly restricted access due to military use – was to be found along the eastern and southern coastlines of the sea. While both positions are, without any doubt, eligible and offer promising possibilities to foster on site nature conservation, the latter position proved to be more viable with respect to the involvement of a variety of people in the sense of sustainable regional development. Therefore, the first coordinated effort to develop the European Green Belt in the Baltic Sea Region is focusing on the eastern and southern coastline of the Baltic. The Baltic Green Belt project, financed by the Baltic Sea Region Programme from the European Regional Development Fund, will serve as an umbrella for Green Belt activities along the shores of the southern and eastern Baltic Sea.

The Green Belt ...

... in winter 2008



... and in spring 2009



Green Belt Notice Board

New Green Belt Coordinator to be Appointed

A new Green Belt Coordination Officer will soon be appointed by IUCN, which hosts the secretariat of the European Green Belt initiative. As former Green Belt Coordination Officer of IUCN, I want to use the chance to thank all partners for the inspiring and highly rewarding cooperation during the last year. It has been a pleasure to work with you, and to experience your dedication in networking for nature conservation and regional development along the Green Belt. With warm regards,
Andrea Strauss



Andrea Strauss is heading for new challenges but will keep supporting the European Green Belt initiative.

andrea_strauss@gmx.de

All along the Watchtower

The TA field guide for border police, nature conservation and other stakeholders for the trilateral border area of FYR Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo (UNSCR1244) is available now at IUCN SEE office in Belgrade. The publication has been produced in the frame of a project on civil-military cooperation funded by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) and IUCN, implemented jointly with three local NGOs, REC Albania, Eco-99 Prizren and The Ecologists Movement Macedonia.



MK AL KSO tomasz.pezold@iucn.org

Green Belt on Documentaries & Google Earth

A number of high quality media productions recently prove the potential of public relations for the Green Belt Initiative. The broadcasting auf the BBC2 documentary „Iron Curtain - The Ribbon of Life“ in March 2009 as well as broadcasts of adapted versions on the German NDR and Austrian ORF tv channels have raised high public awareness for the initiative. The ORF documentary will also be presented at the Linz09 exhibition „Border. Wilderness.Future - The European Green Belt“, which is open to the public from 4th July 2009-08th January 2010 in Linz, Austria. The documentary „Borders Separate - Nature Unites“, produced with support of German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), is now available online at the website www.bonntv.net/movies/greenbelt.html.

A nice example how to use the virtual geographic information program Google Earth for public relations on activities along the Green Belt is available the site www.bund.net/bundnet/themen_und_projekte/gruenes_band/auf_google_earth_erleben/. The regional coordinator for Central Europe, BUND displays a flight along the Green Belt in Germany, accompanied by links to activities along its course.



A flight along the German Green Belt on Google Earth.

Green Belt Publication in German

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the political changes in Europe and the fall of the so called iron curtain the German Federal Agency for Nature conservation is preparing a special issue of the nature conservation Journal „Natur und Landschaft“ on the German and European Green Belt in German language, which will be published at the beginning of September. It will cover the full range of topics the European initiative and from all along the Belt, including on the Baltic written by the INTER-project „Baltic This special issue 9/10 2009 „Das Grüne Band – 20 Jahre nach dem Fall des Eisernen Vorhangs“ (approx. 90 pages) can be ordered at the cost of 14 € + mailing expenses at the address below.



GER <http://www.natur-und-landschaft.de>

Contribute to Concept for Green Belt Centre

For the conceptual support of a centre on the European Green Belt at the former inner-German border, organizers are interested in learning from your experiences and ideas.

The centre, situated in a historical manor in the council of Höchheim, shall harbour a permanent exhibition on the Green Belt, for which suggestions would be appreciated.

The centre will combine rehabilitation of a historical architectural monument with awareness raising for the environmental, cultural and historical distinctions of the European Green Belt, the marketing of regional ecological products, sustainable regional tourism and international youth exchange.



GER helmut.kuerschner@t-online.de
maria.barthold@boehrer-ig.de

Austrian Award for Green Belt Project

In February 2009, a project on experiencing Natura 2000 protected areas along the Green Belt was awarded by the federal state of Lower Austria (Niederösterreich).

The project carried out by the Naturschutzbund NÖ and Naturfreunde Internationale in cooperation with local communities, has received an award as an exemplary regional activity on promoting Natura 2000 sites.

The project partners engage in establishing six so-called „Natura Trails“ in Natura 2000 sites along the course of the Green Belt at the Lower Austrian border. The trails shall present less well-known areas such as the Pannonian Sand Dunes or the Hainberger Berge with the help of multimedia methods, guided tours and events.



Mag. Margit Gross, GF Naturschutzbund NÖ - 3. von links. Autor: Hans-Martin Berg.

AU barbara.grabner@naturschutzbund.at
www.naturatrails.net

A Network Project for the Baltic Sea Coast



baltic greenbelt

Project Facts

- Project Name: Baltic Green Belt
- Lead Partner: Kiel University, Germany (CAU)
- Project community: 13 partners and 9 associated organisations (universities, environmental NGOs, regional administrations, national/regional parks, municipalities)
- Project Period: January 2009 - January 2012
- Total Budget: 2,1 Mio
- Funding Body: BSRP (ERDF)

Green Belt at the Coast

The Baltic Green Belt is unique in that it marks a long coastal stretch in the otherwise almost purely continental Green Belt. A number of problems specific to the coast arise in sustainable development and nature conservation: immense conflicts due to new interests and activities (near-shore mining, power generation, bridge constructions and shipping), differences and even contradictions in legislation on land and in the sea, heavy impacts on the coast with the sources lying far inland etc. Taking up the European Green Belt approach, this BSRP funded project unites a diverse set of partners engaged in sustainable economy and ecology. The Baltic Green Belt project focusses on improving the ecological situation of the coastal strip on both sides of the waterline, while likewise promoting social and economic aspects of sustainability to secure economic prosperity (see pages 4-6 for partners and activities).

The project addresses major environmental policy objectives. For the Baltic, environmental policies are mainly forwarded by the European Directives as well as recommendations formulated by the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (also: Helsinki Commission, HELCOM). The HELCOM released an international management plan for the Baltic in 2007, the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan. Furthermore, the specific recommendation about "Protection of Coastal Strips" (HELCOM 15/1) and the EU Recommendation "Implementation of integrated coastal zone management in Europe" have set out environmental objectives, which this project will help to reach. The project goals and the fact box can be found below and on the right hand side.

BSRP: Investing in the Future of Europe

The Baltic Green Belt project is funded under the Baltic Sea Region Programme (BSRP) - a transnational cooperation programme part-financed by the European Union. The Programme's goal is to make the Baltic Sea region an attractive place to invest, work and live in. Running from 2007 to 2013, it is financed through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) which supports regional development and territorial cooperation by funding research, innovation, environmental protection, infrastructure and risk prevention. It is intended to help reduce imbalances between regions of the EU.

The project Baltic Green Belt will contribute to Priority 3 of the BSRP, "Baltic Sea as a common resource", which has the objective to improve the management of Baltic Sea resources in order to achieve a better environmental state. The priority focuses on joint transnational solutions reducing the pollution of the Baltic Sea and improving sustainable management of the sea as a common resource.

Regional contact persons in the public authorities of the member states help to support the development Interreg initiatives emerging locally. The Baltic Green Belt project received major support by the Ministry for Justice, Employment and European Affairs of Schleswig-Holstein.



Coordination Based in Germany

In large scale projects involving many partners, it is crucial to entrust an experienced, engaged lead partner with the coordination and administration. In case of the Baltic Green Belt project, the coastal geography branch of Kiel University (CAU), led by Prof. Horst Sterr, took the lead.

Geography is highly interdisciplinary and mostly oriented towards application. It bridges the gap not only between natural and social sciences but also between scientists and practitioners and thus suits the needs of the European Green Belt initiative very well.

The coastal geography group of Kiel University addresses major issues of coastal changes and coast-related risks both in Germany and world-wide, in e.g. landscape and heritage interpretation, vulnerability assessments, conflict management at the coast and climate change effect detection. With regard to these issues, the group has carried out a number of research projects financed by the European union, the German Federal Ministry of Research (BMBF), the State of Schleswig-Holstein and others sources.

The CAU team is completed by the Institute for Tourism and Recreational Research in Northern Europe (N.I.T.) for additional support in project management and the Landesgesellschaft Mecklenburg-Vorpommern for administrative support.

The N.I.T. is a research institution for tourism issues and related subject areas that engages in, basic research, market research, expertise & development and sustainable tourism development.



www.balticgreenbelt.net



EU <http://eu.baltic.net>



Project Goals

- Development of an ecological network following the Green Belt vision.
- Collaboration of environmental NGOs, universities and authorities for sustainable coastal development.
- Protection of the environment and natural resources; improvement of the ecological status of the marine and terrestrial Baltic Sea area (eutrophication, waste water, agriculture, tourism).
- Supporting the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea action plan for the protection of the Baltic.
- Evaluation of the implementation of international agreements for coastal protection along the Baltic Green Belt.
- Identification of barriers and success factors/indicators of sustainable coastal development.



Horst Sterr, head of the CAU Coastal Geography group coordinates the project



Michael Schultz from the CAU Coastal Geography is project administrator

GER

sterr@geographie.uni-kiel.de
m.schultz@geographie.uni-kiel.de



Baltic Green Belt: Working together...

Baltic Green Belt wants to apply the European Green Belt vision to both sides of the waterline of the south-eastern Baltic coast. Tackling this area closes the longest "missing link" in the European Green Belt network. The consortium unites a diverse set of partners engaged in sustainable economy and ecology. It is comprised of NGOs, scientific institutions, public authorities and economic stakeholders and thus excellently mirrors the Green Belt tradition of successfully integrating a wide set of actors and supporters. The planned activities include reviews of political and scientific documents, the formulation of recommendations and regional pilot projects in tourism, regional management, agriculture. A significant part of the project work is made up of communication and dissemination, including conferences, meetings, publications and websites. This is explained on the one hand with the novelty of the Green Belt and its approach in the Baltic area - the "product" and the idea have to be intensively spread and characterized to be well understood, and sustainable coastal development is per se often complex. On the other hand, the implementation into politics, policies and programmes is crucial for a successful Green Belt performance, and so almost all project partners contribute to this activity. As a whole, the project partners tackle a number of hot topics in different manners:

Stimulating Sustainable Coastal Policies in Germany

The Baltic Green Belt in Germany is about 1750 km long with the biggest part of it belonging to the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. During the times of the Iron Curtain, some parts of the coastline were authorized for the public due to its importance as a holiday region. However, large parts were military restricted areas, especially in areas close to the Western German border. The Eastern German part of the Baltic Green Belt was characterized by a system of control and restriction zones which reached up to 5 km inland. People were resettled from the coast and so an environment developed close to nature and widely unutilised. In contrast the western German people were allowed to travel close to the former border. In Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, a very dense net of national nature protection and NATURA 2000 areas exist to conserve a great variety of habitats, such as coastal lagoons, cliffs, sandy beaches, reefs, islands and estuaries. However, power plant constructions, pipelines, huge hotel complexes, gravel and sand extractions, marine and terrestrial pollution threaten these pearls of nature.

Within the German Baltic Green Belt project the main goal is to secure important and unique areas at both sites of the coastline - on land and in the sea - by establishing a network of local authorities, NGOs and citizens in order to exchange experience and knowledge about nature conservation. Another concern is preventing or improving the implementation of economical projects by taking part in planning approval proceedings. In addition international lobbying work supports the project activities.

These goals are being pursued by the two regional branches of BUND (Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland, German division of Friends of the Earth) bordering the Baltic. While BUND Schleswig-Holstein focuses on national & international lobbying, the BUND Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania wants to expand the regional networking.



Elke Körner from BUND Schleswig-Holstein



Jan Barkowski of BUND Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania

GER elke.koerner@bund-sh.de
jan.barkowski@bund.net

Promoting Ecological Agriculture in Poland

The Polish Green Federation GAJA will tackle a diffuse, but very urgent and up-to-date problem: eutrophication. The Polish dune and cliff shores are connected with the inland through underground water runoff and the large input of river water from the Odra river (Oder), the second largest river in the Baltic Sea draining more than half the country. The reasons for 99% of the water quality problems along the 800 km of coastline are found inland. The main source of sea pollution with nutrients is agriculture. There are about 2,6 million farms, 18,5 million hectares of agricultural land, over 14 millions pigs, 5,6 million cattle and 150,6 million poultry in Poland. This is the main reason for the country acting as the biggest source of nitrogen and phosphorus run-off into the Baltic Sea. The problem is intensive, industrial farming. As agriculture in Poland is expected to grow in the upcoming years, even heavier nutrient loads to the Baltic must be expected. Therefore, the impact of industrial animal farming on the pollution of the Baltic Sea needs to be reduced by motivating farmers to carry out diverse, environmentally friendly agriculture. Within the Baltic Green Belt project activities in Poland are focused on improving this situation.

This pilot project has two main fields of activity: direct consultation and training of farmers; and monitoring of industrial animal farms with respect to legal international obligations such as the recently revised EU Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) Directive. The main driver for this pilot project is the Green Federation GAJA, a Polish NGO working in the field of active nature conservation, environment protection and civil society awareness rising since 1993. Green Federation GAJA focuses their efforts on prevention of the loss and restoration of what seems to be lost: rare, endangered species, traditional landscapes, respect



Jakub Skorupski from Green Federation GAJA

PL [Jakub Skorupski: jakub@gajanet.pl](mailto:jakub@gajanet.pl)
[Aneta Kozłowska: aneta@kajonet.pl](mailto:aneta@kajonet.pl)

Sustainable Coastal Protection along the Lithuanian Coast

The Lithuanian coast is dominated by the 100 km long peninsula of the Curonian Spit which Lithuania shares with the Russian Kaliningrad Region. This narrow sand strip hosting the highest dunes in the Baltic Sea region, is experiencing serious erosion. With a National Park established and numerous tourist facilities attracting international guests the need for coastal protection measures aimed at conserving natural values and cultural heritage is obvious. Similar erosion problems can be found further north, where the Pajuris Seaside Regional Park - a government protected territory of the Lithuanian seaside - stretches to the main Lithuanian tourist resort of Palanga. The Park covers 5033 ha on land and 30 km in the water area of the Baltic Sea. Different measures of coastal protection ranging from beach-nourishment to managed foredune formation are applied in these areas.



Stabilised dunes on the Lithuanian coast.

In recent legal documents related to coastal protection, the priority is given to preservation of natural landscape and natural coastal formation processes, complex coordination of coastal protection and coastal use. Implementation, however, has not been carried out strictly in all places.

Within the Baltic Green Belt project, the Coastal



Nerijus Blažauskas from CORPI

Research and Planning Institute (CORPI) of Klaipėda University will develop recommendations for good practice of coastal protection and conservation aimed at symbiosis of research, legislation and execution in order to support the authorities.

CORPI focuses on fundamental and applied scientific research in the fields of integrated coastal zone management, environmental impact and risk assessment, geological, geophysical, biological and ecological investigations, climate changes prediction and ecosystem modelling. The project activities will be carried out in cooperation with the Pajuris Regional Park administration and the regional NGO Zvejone, who will be responsible for public awareness and information campaigns for the Green Belt initiative.



Jurate Morkveinaite from Zvejone

LT [J. Morkveinaite: zvejone@zvejone.lt](mailto:j.morkveinaite@zvejone.lt)
[Nerijus Blažauskas: nb@corpi.ku.lt](mailto:nb@corpi.ku.lt)

Military Heritage as a Chance for Sustainable Tourism in Latvia

The Green Belt along the eastern central Baltic and the Gulf of Riga is about 300 km long. The southern half belongs to the historical area of Courland, while the northern half is part of Livland. In Latvia, public access of beaches was strictly restricted by the Soviet authorities and only little development took place in these regions so that nature was comparatively free to reign here. At the same time, military heritage from WW2 and the subsequent Soviet era are a typical feature of the south eastern Baltic coast. Dozens of military objects such as Ruins of bunkers, storages and fortifications along the coast offer a unique chance for modern touristical development following the rules of sustainability in ecological, economical and social terms.



The North Forts of Liepāja Military Port serve as a good example of how military heritage can be used for sustainable, information based tourism

One of them is the narrow-gauge railway of Nordic Courland built during the German Nazi occupation during WW2 for wood transportation. The Latvian Country Tourism Organisation (Lauku Celotājs) together with the Slitere National Park administration will develop this railway and other sites along the Latvian coast to make them useful as unique tourism locations combining cultural with natural heritage.

Slitere National Park is a specially protected nature territory included in the Natura 2000 network of Special Areas of Conservation of the European Union. The park covers 16360 ha of land and 10130 ha of sea. Slitere National Park as it is today was established in 2000, but the oldest part was taken under protection already in 1921.

The Latvian Country Tourism Association "Lauku celotājs" is a non-governmental organization established in 1993 and unites owners of rural tourism accommodations and other stakeholders in Latvia. At the beginning of 2009 the association based in Riga had some 350 members. The main goal for the association is to develop well balanced and environmentally friendly tourism in the countryside of Latvia. Its functions are rural tourism product development, quality control and labeling, provider training and consultations, promotion/marketing and lobbying for interests of members and project activities. The association is currently involved in several national and EU projects that complement each other and together serve the described goals.

LV Antra Dambergā, Andra Ratkevica
antra@celotajs.lv
andra.ratkevica@slitere.gov.lv

Assessing & Promoting the Green Belt Estonia

Estonia has a coastline of some 3800 km including several islands. While disclosure due to military use during Soviet times has left a green heritage in some areas, others must be considered brown heritage due to military pollution. Overall in Estonia, 87.000 hectares were designated military areas, a large part of which was located on the coast. In the project, Estonia takes a systematic approach to the National Green Belt development: based on a methodology for evaluating landscape values of coastal areas developed by the Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (IAES) of the Estonian University of Life Sciences (EMU), an inventory of the Estonian coastline will be carried out. The IAES is a leading institution for research, survey, monitoring, teaching and training centre for agricultural and environmental sciences in the Baltic Region and has carried out several projects related to the Baltic Green Belt. Prof. Kalev Sepp as the European Green Belt focal point for Estonia has been actively promoting the European Green Belt vision for years.



Kalev Sepp from EMU

EST Kalev Sepp
kalev.sepp@emu.ee

Sustainable Island Management in Estonia

Vormsi, separated from the Estonian mainland by a 3 km wide sund, is a beautiful, rural island west of Estonia with about 350 inhabitants. The local residents of the so-called "snake island" (original Swedish name: Ormsö) have a rich cultural heritage and identify strongly with local traditions. However, the island is currently threatened by uncontrolled tourism development not in line with the residents' values and identity. The project partners are initiating a participatory process to develop a comprehensive management plan following the sustainability principles of integrated coastal zone management (ICZM).

Three main partners are involved in this pilot project: the people of Vormsi, organised in the local NGO Läänerannik, the Estonian Society for Nature Conservation (Eesti Looduskaitse Selts, ELKS) and the IAES (see above). Läänerannik's strength for the project is the closeness to the local people perspective combined with experience in international nature conservation projects. ELKS is a national NGO with more than 50 local branches all over the country. The NGO will introduce a regional forum for coastal conservation involving all relevant stakeholders on the site of Vormsi.



Arvo Raudsepp from ELKS

EST Elle Puurmann, Arvo Raudsepp
elle@vormsi.ee, nature@hot.ee



Geographical Institute, CAU
Kiel, Germany
www.kuestengeographie.de



BUND Mecklenburg-
Western Pomerania
Rostock, Germany
www.bund-mv.de



BUND Schleswig-Holstein
Kiel, Germany
www.bund-sh.de



Green Federation Gaja
Szczecin, Poland
www.gajanet.pl



Environmental Club Žvejone
Klaipėda, Lithuania
www.zvejone.lt



Coastal Research &
Planning Institute, KU
Klaipėda, Lithuania
www.corpi.ku.lt



Latvian Country Tourism
Association
Riga, Latvia
www.celotajs.lv



Slitere National Park
Administration
Talsi District, Latvia
www.slitere.gov.lv



Estonian society for Nature
Conservation
Tallinn, Estonia
www.elks.ee



Läänerannik
Vormsi island, Estonia
www.l-rannik.ee



Inst. of Agricultural and
Environmental Sciences, EMU
Tartu, Estonia
www.emu.ee



Coalition Clean Baltic
Uppsala, Sweden
www.ccb.se



IUCN
Brussels, Belgium
www.iucn.org

Associated Partners



Federal Agency for Nature
Conservation Germany
Bonn, Germany
www.bfn.de



BUND-Project Office Green
Belt
Bund Naturschutz in Bayern
Nuremberg, Germany
www.bund.net/green-belt-europe



Agency for Environment
and Nature Mecklenburg-
Western Pomerania
Rostock, Germany
www.staun-mv.de



Zachodniopomorskie
Voivodeship Office
Szczecin, Poland
www.um-zachodniopomorskie.pl



Pajūris Regional Park
Klaipėda, Lithuania
www.pajuris.info/en



Sillamäe City Administra-
tion
Sillamäe, Estonia
www.sillamae.ee



Baltic Fund for Nature
St. Petersburg, Russia
<http://bfn.org.ru>



Centre for Environmental
Initiatives
St. Petersburg, Russia



Green World
St. Petersburg, Russia
www.greenworld.org.ru

... Baltic Sea Coast

An Information Bus Tour for the Russian Coast

A stretch of 100 km along the southern shore of the eastern most part of the Baltic Sea - the Gulf of Finland - belongs to Russian territory. Three unique nature reserves - Kotelsky, Kurgalsky and Lebiashie (two of them Ramsar sites) - are located here. However, the area is under heavy industrial pressure: the seaport Ust-Luga with currently 10 terminals is expanding rapidly. The village of New Sun City will be turned into a town of 35.000 people to house port and infrastructure workers. The construction of the New Leningrad Nuclear Power Plant was started in 2007. Public participation in decision making is declared in Russian legislation, but its implementation is slow due to bureaucratic barriers and low public awareness. Therefore, the Baltic Fund for Nature and Green World, plan to arrange bus campaigns to inform the general public and decision makers about the natural and cultural values of the region and alternative ways of coastal development.

RU

Vera Ovcharenko (BFN)
vera-ovcharenko@mail.ru



Ecosanitation for Russian Dachas

About 6.5 million people populate St.Petersburg (5 million) and Leningrad region (1.5 million) at the eastern shores of the Gulf of Finland. Over 2.5 million people in this area have single-family houses or dachas (weekend homes) around St.Petersburg and live there either constantly or in the warm season. As an organised waste water system is missing, the dominating method for managing toilet wastes in the area are latrine pits. Therefore, leaks from latrine pits pollute ground waters and adjacent rivers and lakes permanently. They bear high health risks and damage to the environment, such as the release of nutrients to surface and ground waters. The Centre for Environmental Initiatives (CEI) based in St. Petersburg plans to implement a pilot project to demonstrate sustainable sanitation at the framework of the Baltic Green Belt project.

RU

Alexander Fedorov (CEI)
ceispb@gmail.com



Additional Funding needed for Russian Partners

The Russian Green Belt partners have shown long-term commitment to the initiative and have proven to be able to meet the strict requirements of the Baltic Sea Region Funding Programme. However, their participation in the Baltic Green Belt project has now been cut off for administrative reasons on the political level. Therefore, both the coordination team and the Russian partners are currently seeking alternative funding opportunities to realise their project ideas and to participate in the European Green Belt initiative. If you are currently engaged in a project proposal and looking for reliable partners in Russia, please consider to get in touch with the partners named above or with the Baltic Green Belt coordination team.

Integrating Science into the Baltic Green Belt

On the scientific side, three universities are participating: The Coastal Geography branch of Kiel University, Germany, the Coastal Research and Planning Institute of the University of Klaipėda, Lithuania, and the Institute of Agriculture and Environmental Science of the Estonian University of Life Sciences.

Since the European recommendations in 2002 to implement Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in member state legislation, numerous studies, state-of-the-art reports, evaluations, plans and implementation projects have been carried out. ICZM is a process for the management of the coast using an integrated approach, regarding all aspects of the coastal zone, including geographical and political boundaries, in an attempt to achieve sustainability. In other words: ICZM is sustainable development of the coast. But how can ICZM be implemented on the local scale in the Green Belt? Which similarities and differences are there between the different countries? The pilot activities carried out within the Baltic Green Belt project shall be accompanied by research resulting in recommendations to foster the implementation of transboundary integrated coastal zone management in the Baltic Green Belt. Further scientific topics will be sustainable coastal protection, nature conservation and climate change.

EST
DE LT

sterr@geographie.uni-kiel.de, kalev.
sepp@emu.ee, nb@geo.lt



Strengthening the European Green Belt Network

In order to embed the Baltic Green Belt project in the existing European Green Belt network and to expand the community, several key players of the existing network as well as important regional NGO networks are involved. The IUCN as the main coordinating body will communicate the project and project results on the European level and provide access to the network. The BUND-Project Office Green Belt at Bund Naturschutz in Bayern e.V. participates as associated partner to assure proper coordination and information exchange between the neighbouring sections. The Fennoscandian Green Belt is represented by the

St. Petersburg based Baltic Fund for Nature. The Coalition Clean Baltic as the main network of environmental NGOs in the Baltic Sea region will assure the dissemination of project results and evolving ideas among Baltic NGOs and GOs currently not involved in the European Green Belt initiative. On the local and national levels, one dissemination partner from each country and a number of associated, mainly governmental organisations will support the communication task.



Jörg Schmiedel
of Coalition Clean Baltic

Jörg Schmiedel, CCB: js@blu-js.de



Green Belt in situ

The 1st Baltic Green Belt Forum

International partners from Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Russia kicked off their project for a sustainable Baltic Sea coast as part of the European Green Belt during the first international Baltic Green Belt Forum on February 19th-22nd in Travemünde, Germany.

One of the key promoters of the European Green Belt and founding father of the Green Belt idea, Kai Frobels (Bund für Naturschutz Bayern), gave insight into the roots of the Green Belt. Karin Ullrich from the German Federal Agency for Nature (BfN), which has given large financial support to European Green Belt activities throughout the last years, pointed out the role of the Green Belt as a European lighthouse project. Andrea Strauss (IUCN) presented outcomes and results of previous activities within the initiative. Among public agencies, the Agency for Environment and Rural Areas the State of Schleswig-Holstein and the State Chancellor of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania gave their support and best wishes to the project. The forum was organised by the BUND Schleswig-Holstein in cooperation with the lead partner, the Coastal Geography branch of Kiel University. All presentations are available for download at the project website (see below).



Partners during the kick-off meeting of Baltic Green Belt in February 2009

Michael Schultz



The meeting's moderator, Wolfgang Günther (N.I.T.), presents Kai Frobels (BN) to the Baltic Green Belt partners

Michael Schultz

At the Reisepavillon Travel Fair

Baltic Green Belt was presented at the international alternative travel fair Reisepavillon by the project coordination team: Wolfgang Günther and Michael Schultz from the University of Kiel together with Green Belt partners from Slovakia set up a stand to inform guests about the project goals. In a public presentation Wolfgang Günther gave an overview of the "Baltic Green Belt – an international nature conservation project with touristic potential".



A common information stand of Green Belt Slovakia & Baltic

Wolfgang Günther

project with touristic potential".

The 19th Reisepavillon was held from February 26th until March 2nd, 2009 in Munich, Germany. This year's thematic focus was on tourism along and beyond the Green Belt. 84 exhibitors from all over Europe came to present their activities.



Michael Schultz (CAU) from the Baltic Green Belt coordination team explains the background of the project to visitors of Reisepavillon 2009

Wolfgang Günther

Visit Baltic Green Belt online

As a hub for information about the project, but also to support exchange with European Green Belt partners from the Southeastern, Central and Fennoscandian Green Belt, a website was established and launched in March 2009.



Here you can read more about the partners involved in the project and the activities that can be expected in the countries along the belt. A newsboard and an events section shall help keep an overview of the numerous Green Belt events in this anniversary and the upcoming years.

If you would like to spread any news to the Baltic Green Belt community or receive news from the project, please contact the project information management: Stefanie Maack.

s.maack@geographie.uni-kiel.de
www.balticgreenbelt.net

Green Belt Focal Points in the Baltic



Prof. Dr. Kalev Sepp
Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Tartu
kalev.sepp@eau.ee
Estonia



Simonas Sabanas
Institute of Geology and Geography, Vilnius
sabanovas@gmail.com
Lithuania



Dr. Grzegorz Rakowski
Institute of Environmental Protection, Warsaw
grzegorz.rakowski@ios.edu.pl
Poland



Dr. Uwe Riecken
Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, Bonn
rieckenu@bfn.de
Germany

Coordinators

European Green Belt
IUCN Programme Office
for South-Eastern Europe
Dr. Ivana Ribara 91
11070 Novi Beograd, Serbia
Phone: +381-11-2272-411
Fax: +381-11-2272-531
boris.erg@iucn.org
www.iucneurope.org

Fennoscandian Green Belt
Baltic Fund for Nature Saint Petersburg
Naturalist Society (BFN)
Universitetskaya emb. 7/9
199034 St. Petersburg, Russia
bfnbfn.org.ru
http://bfn.org.ru

Baltic Green Belt Project
Geographical Institute, Kiel University
Ludewig-Meyn-Str. 14
24098 Kiel, Germany
Phone: +49-880-2944
Fax: +49-880-4658
sterr@geographie.uni-kiel.de
www.kuestengeographie.de
www.balticgreenbelt.net

Central European Green Belt
BUND-Project Office Green Belt
Nund Naturschutz in Bayern e.V.
Bauernfeindstrasse 23
90471 Nuremberg, Germany
Phone: +49-911-8187826
Fax: +49-911-869568
liana.geidezis@bund-naturschutz.de
melanie.kreutz@bund-naturschutz.de
www.bund.net/green-belt-europe

South-Eastern European Green Belt
Stiftung Europäisches Naturerbe
(EURONATUR)
Konstanzer Strasse 22
78315 Radolfzell, Germany
Phone: +49-7732-92720
Fax: +49-7732-92722
info@euronatur.org
www.euronatur.org

Dear Reader

Twenty years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, activities of the European Green Belt have been successfully initiated all along its former course. After numerous projects in the South-Eastern, the Central European and the Fennoscandian Green Belt areas, the last missing piece - the Baltic Sea coast - was now added to fill a large gap in the network of conservation and sustainable development actors from the Barents to the Black and Adriatic Seas. This newsletter issue is dedicated to the Baltic Green Belt project, its history, goals, planned activities and participants.

The road towards this EU-funded project was steep and windy, but as it was successful in the end, it's path shall be outlined here briefly: The starting point was the regional Baltic Sea working group of Friends of the Earth Germany (BUND AG Ostsee, www.ostseeschutz.de). Enthusiastic about the general idea of the Green Belt initiative, the group regretted that there were only few activities in the frame of the project in Baltic Sea Region. Hence, they looked for possibilities to fill this gap and set up a Green Belt environmental network for the Baltic. The Baltic Sea Region Programme (BSRP, formerly INTERREG IVB) funded from the European Regional Development Fund seemed suitable. However, application criteria were tough and a reliable group of partners with convincing ideas needed to be gathered to meet these criteria.

The first major step was a sailing tour along the German coast carried out by the two regional Baltic branches of BUND in summer 2007 and sponsored by the German environmental lottery BinGO! This tour gained substantial attention among the German media and was essential to establishing contacts with and gain support from decision makers and confirmed that the Green Belt approach has a most promising potential. The tour was followed by numerous working trips to meet and involve partners from the neighbouring Baltic Sea countries. The existing network of environmental NGOs under the umbrella of the Coalition Clean Baltic was an excellent basis for these efforts. As NGOs turned out not be eligible for coordinating a project within the BSRP, the Coastal Geography Branch of Kiel University was located as an experienced coordination partner. Together with the Institute for Tourism and Recreational Research in Northern Europe (N.I.T.) and the project initiators, the regional BUND branches of Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the project application team was well equipped with competence in nature conservation practice, science and - last but not least - experience with similar European funding programmes from previous projects. Having found suitable organisations, ready to contribute meaningful activities in the sense of the overall project setup, the next challenge was to explain the complex BSRP programme regulations to the committed but partly quite inexperienced partners. The BSRP Joint Technical Secretariat in Rostock provided not only comprehensive documents but also valuable personal consultation to the application team. Furthermore, the German Federal district Schleswig-Holstein supported the project application: The Ministry of Justice, Employment and European Affairs offered consultation services as a contact point for Interreg projects including the BSRP. Such contact points exist for all member states and contacting them is absolutely advisable. The next challenge was to come up with a manageable budget. As the majority of partners are small or medium



Wolfgang Günther
N.I.T.
Baltic Green Belt
Coordination

NGOs, the main barrier was to come up with matching funds which are required to receive co-funding at all. It was only due to a new regulation that many partners were able to participate at all: Since 2009, voluntary work is eligible as matching fund contribution. Finally, after about 9 months of intensive preparatory work, a selection of 15 partners had managed to raise the necessary national co-financing and signed their partner declaration in time. After this successful project application we would like to encourage other European Green Belt activists to make more use of European funding opportunities, be persistent and make use of the European Green Belt Network.



Stefanie Maack
CAU
Baltic Green Belt
Communication

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IUCN Regional Office for Europe
Boulevard Louis Schmidt 64
1040 Brussels, Belgium
Phone: +32-2-732-8299
Fax: +32-2-732-9499
europe@iucn.org
www.iucneurope.org

responsible editor:
Stefanie Maack
Kiel University, Geographical Institute
24098 Kiel, Germany
Tel: +341-880-1782
Email: s.maack@geographie.uni-kiel.de
www.balticgreenbelt.net
www.kuestengeographie.de



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