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Alpine Pastures Active – New Ways for Biodiversity

ANL – Bavarian Academy for Nature and Landscape Conservation

Abstract

In the middle of 2009 the Interreg IV project „Alpine Pastures Active – New Ways for the Biodiversity" started. Initiators are the Nature Conservation Department of Office of the Provincial Government of Salzburg and the Bavarian Academy for Nature and Landscape Conservation.

With resumption of the management of six alpine pastures an optimum form of management for the conservation and development of these alpine ecosystems should be evolved. The focus is on management methods with different forms of grazing, especially on the combination of different animal genera of rare farm animal races.

The test areas are located in Salzburg Federal State / A (Kallbrunnalm) as well as in Upper Bavaria/ D (Landkreis Traunstein), most of them in protected areas.

The project wants to exemplify and promote an economically sound and ecologically commendable management of alpine pastures (best practice). Therefore an interdisciplinary approach is needed which considers biodiversity and resources as well as cultural and socio-economic aspects.

Goat of the endangered farm animal breed "Blobe Ziege" at the Kallbrunnalm/Kühkranz

We use defined test series for activation of under-grazed surfaces especially in view of climate change. The focus of tested management methods is on nature conservation and development. Main target is the optimisation of different surface management methods.

In order to catch the effects on animals and plant species which are specific for alpine pastures vegetation-ecological, zoological and historical monitoring has been implemented.

Classical methods have been applied as for example the analysis of permanent observation plots and transects, detailed vegetation mappings, scoop catch, pitfall traps and oeko-kad-aspirator. Changes in land use and management have been identified by the interpretation of aerial photo series, the evaluation of historical data and interviews with contemporary witnesses and experts. Moreover, erosion forms in over-exploited surfaces with and without grazing impacts are screened. The development of nutritional value and supply of biomass are further parameters to consider in the context of a sensible reestablishment of pasturage.

The applicability of new satellite supported methods for an intelligent pasture management is tested to answer different practice-oriented issues. The telemetric collection and analysis of location and behavioural data of the

grazing animals shows the differences in seasonal use of vegetation plots and gives hints on favoured fodder plants and resting places.

To define standard guidelines for surface management and recommendations for best practice, the pooling of the different mentioned systematic approaches is necessary. The overlay of the acquired data creates the basis for the definition of ecologically and locally optimised surface management and identification of the best practices for comparable alpine regions. Furthermore, the acquired data should estimate grazing intensity (number of animals/ha, retention period, plant selection) in combination with soil type data for understanding the future development of erosion (with and without grazing influence).

Beyond the complex analysis and evaluation of the generated data, workshops and meetings with stakeholders are organized. Major task is developing strategies to prevent conflicts and raising the awareness about the economic and cultural value of alpine areas with high potential of nature conservation.

In order to enforce the long-term protection of the nature conservational values, it must be given a special focus to the integration of regional economic aspects. The involvement of decision makers is condition precedent for success in the implementation of best practice. Besides measures recommendations for future nature conservation contracts, the demonstration of possibilities for strengthening the regional economy by alternative management forms is in focus. The promotion of rare farm animals and their owners as key personalities in the context of multifunctional and sustainable agriculture is strongly put forward.

Since this is the first cross border project of this kind between the Salzburg and Bavaria, it supports actively the establishment of counterstrategies for preventing the loss of attractiveness and value of alpine pastures.

More information

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