Chapter 21

Guidelines and Recommendations

Robin J.A. Sharp
European Sustainable Use Specialist Group of IUCN-SSC, UK

Julie A. Ewald
Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, UK

Robert E. Kenward
Anatrack Ltd, UK

ABSTRACT

Policy guidelines and recommendations were derived from direct and indirect sample surveys of stakeholders in most European Union countries and some others and from related analytical work. They call for rationalisation of the high level environmental assessment systems in Europe, greater sharing of data derived from them, more research into the information needs of stakeholders, especially local stakeholders, who take key decisions about the environment, recognition of the value of participation in biodiversity-related activities by ordinary users of the countryside, promotion of citizen capability to use electronic mapping tools for biodiversity monitoring and management, analysis of the links between land-use changes and success in biodiversity conservation, and support for progress towards a comprehensive decision-support system via an internet portal providing a one-stop site for ideas and knowledge.

THE ROLE OF GUIDELINES DERIVED FROM A SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PROJECT

TESS was a scientific research project. This means that among other things it strove to be objective and rigorous in gathering and analysing information. It benefited from financial resources provided by the organs of the European Union and the cultural richness which comes from collaboration among a range of European research institutions. At the same time the project was constrained by formal requirements to follow programmes of work prepared long in advance, which do not allow for “adaptive management.”

When the object of study is not the behaviour of a restricted number of animals or plants in a laboratory but, in effect, the 500 million strong population of Europe, the challenge to achieve rigour and objectivity is all the greater. Much of
the work in TESS was about exploring the capacity and willingness of ordinary people using or managing land to record scientific information in a way that will assist their decisions and those of others to be more favourable for conserving wildlife. This encompasses farmers and gardeners, as well as those who hunt or fish, walk in the countryside or enjoy observing nature.

Asking relevant questions either directly or through representatives is subject to a range of limitations such as possible misunderstanding of what is intended on the part of the respondent or their lack of knowledge or reluctance to take seriously “yet another survey” whose relevance is obscure to them. Nevertheless TESS has done its best, within quite modest human and financial resources, to conduct its enquiries on the same basis in over 130 randomly sampled local communities in 27 European countries, as well as carrying out 10 local case studies involving direct socio-economic surveys and experimental mapping by non-experts.

One of the keys to the success of the Pan-European surveys was the network of Country Co-ordinators developed by the European Sustainable Use Specialist Group of IUCN/SSC during the previous GEMCONBIO-UNWIRE study. This network provided a combination of translation skills with expertise in the subject of the questionnaires and was crucial in persuading local communities and land managers to participate. This relatively inexpensive methodology appears to be fairly unusual or perhaps even pioneering, at least in the general area of science in which we have been operating.

**Underlying Philosophy**

Having made this claim to objectivity in a sphere of social enquiry where precision is inevitably elusive, we should perhaps indicate the broad approach which lies behind TESS. This is a general conviction that conservation of biodiversity needs to be addressed within a wide context of human activity as recently encapsulated in the Malawi and Addis Ababa Principles adopted by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). These principles and guidelines of an ecosystem approach and sustainable use of biodiversity recognise that, to coin a phrase, “we are all in this together”.

Thus, without ignoring the importance of protected areas and species, the TESS project has focused on what is referred to as the wider countryside. This is the roughly 80% of land and inland water bodies in Europe that is not subject to special designation, where people have to earn a living or wish to practice a variety of pursuits that do not have conservation as their primary objective. Unless their impact on biodiversity is taken into account and unless their use of it is sustainable then conservation risks being confined to isolated islands of strictly protected land surrounded by a sea of intensive land-use.

Going beyond this we see the potential for such use to provide incentives for conservation, when people recognise the social and economic benefits which derive from it. To put it another way, governance objectives are normally achieved either through carrots or sticks. Regulation, which remains necessary in many contexts, is the stick, whereas incentives are carrots. We have been concerned mainly with carrots, that is to explore the extent to which people can be motivated to integrate conservation goals or environmentally friendly use into their day-to-day activities on land or water, as well as what are the information needs to make this possible.

Another important aspect of the thinking behind TESS is explained in a paper derived from the GEMCONBIO project, prepared by a number of TESS participants and others and published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science (PNAS) in 2011. This paper “Identifying governance strategies that effectively support ecosystem services, resource sustainability, and
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