

## THE SYSTEM OF PROTECTED AREAS IN THE EMILIA-ROMAGNA REGION, ITALY. CASE STUDY: THE REGIONAL PARK OF UPPER MODENESE APPENNINES

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### **Abstract**

*The present work has a teaching purpose and it is addressed to the students. In the Emilia-Romagna Region, to the North of Italy, in accordance with the Regional Law no.6/February 17, 2005, five categories of protected areas were established: regional parks, inter-regional parks, natural reservations, protected natural and semi-natural landscapes and areas of ecological rebalance. In addition there are the areas proposed by the EU in the Networking Programme "Nature 2000". The regional parks comprise five territorial zones. The activities allowed in the Upper Modenese Appennines Regional Park have been presented as well as its zoning. Also it has been suggested that setting up of Visit Centres in the protected areas of Romania would be really useful.*

**Key words:** protected area, regional park, regulation, plan, law.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Republic of Italy is made up of 20 regions and one of them is Emilia-Romagna. It lies north of the country along the ancient roman road Via Emilia, at present an important highway which crosses the centre of region from the Adriatic Sea to the inner Po Plain, linking the towns of Rimini, Bologna, Modena, Parma and Piacenza.

The first protected area in Italy was established in 1922, namely the Gran Paradiso National Park and its purpose was to protect the fauna, flora, geological bedrocks and landscape. Soon, other areas followed. During the 70's, first nature protection laws were issued for each territorial region and for the first time, a draft bill for a national legal framework with regard to nature preservation. Not till 1991 was the Framework Law no. 394/ December 6, 1991, on protected areas, approved. It is a national law that establishes the principles and lines for the set up of parks and reservations, defining a system in which the state together with the regions act complementary for nature preservation [3].

## DISCUSSIONS

### **The system of protected areas in the Emilia-Romagna Region**

In the Emilia-Romagna Region, the system of protected areas was established by the Regional Law no.2/January 24, 1977. In accordance with this law, the Regional Council has individualized the first series of territories of a particular natural interest and set up 4 protected areas. The law was completed later, with the Regional Law no.11/April 2, 1988, a framework law with the provisions of setting up and managing the natural reservations and parks in accordance with the land planning principles. This law, as well as Regional Law no.40/1992 which was issued later, provided the existence of the following 3 protected areas categories: *regional parks*, *natural reservations* and *areas of ecological rebalance*. The natural reservations were also classified in 4 categories: *integral*, *orientated*, *partial* and *special* [3].

In accordance with the more recent Regional Law no.6/February 17, 2005, in the Emilia-Romagna Region, the following 5 categories of protected areas, still in use, have been approved: *regional parks*, *inter-regional parks*, *natural reservations*, *protected natural and semi-natural landscapes* and *areas of ecological rebalance*.

The regional parks are defined as territorial systems which, because of the particular interest in their natural, scientific, historical-cultural and landscape values or due to their complex characteristics, are jointly managed with a view on their preservation, re-qualification and capitalization of the natural and semi-natural environments and their resources and also on developing the human and economic activities which are compatible with the protection of ecosystems.

The interregional parks consist of territorial assemblies defined by natural, scientific, historic-cultural and landscape values of a particular or complex interest, that can, by their geographical position, have the role of connecting the protected areas belonging to the adjacent regions.

The natural reservations are territories of limited surface, set up because of their regional importance and managed with the view of preserving their particular morphological, biological, ecological, scientific and cultural characters and content.

The protected natural and semi-natural landscapes are areas with isolated landscape values, of considerable extension, characterized by an interaction balanced between natural elements and traditional human activities, in which the presence of the habitat well preserved and predominant or major interest species has as a result the preservation of nature and biodiversity.

The ecological rebalance areas are natural or in process of re-naturalization areas, having a limited extension, identified within territories with intense human activities, organized so that they guarantee species preservation, restoration and reconstitution, on behalf of the good functioning of the habitats and as a refuge for the animal and vegetal species.

The protected areas established prior to the approval of Law 6/2005, keep the typological classification defined in the setting up document.

Through the program proposed by the EU, Networking Programme “Nature 2000” two new categories of protected areas have been established, namely “*Zones of Special Protection*” (ZSP), defined by the Directive no.79/409/EEC and “*Sites of Community Importance*” specified by the Directive no.92/43/EEC. Also, the Emilia-Romagna Region recognizes the importance of “*Areas of Ecological Connection*” for the protection and preservation of flora and fauna, the so-called “ecological corridors” established between the protected areas.

We may also make mention that the EU has established the following names for the protected areas proposed by this program: “Special Areas of Conservation”, according to the Directive on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC), respectively “Special Protection Areas”, according to the Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) [1]. It seems that the Emilia-Romagna Region has modified these names but the statute of the areas remained the same.

An Administration Consortium – consisting of the Council board, an Executive Committee, a President and a Supervising structure – and a Technical Scientific Committee, manages the regional parks.

For each regional park a *Territorial Plan of the Park* is made and it foresees the content and the general standards that aim at environment protection within the park perimeter. In accordance with this Plan, the territory of the regional park is divided into several territorial zones, delimited by their homogeneous functional and productive use. So, in the parks of Emilia-Romagna Region we can notice as follows [4]:

- ◆ zone „A” of integral protection – in which, the natural environment is protected completely. It is a zone of strict protection. The access is only approved for scientific and educational purpose, authorized only by the Agency of park administration.

- ◆ zone „B” of general protection – in which soil, subsoil, water, vegetation and fauna are strictly protected. Building new municipal objectives, extending the existing buildings as well as some actions of territory remaking that are not in conformity with the objectives of nature and landscape protection, are strictly forbidden. The agricultural, forestry, stock farming, agro-tourism and tourism, as well as the infrastructure they

need, are the only activities allowed, provided that they are compatible with the exigencies concerning the environment protection stated in the Territorial Plan of the park.

◆ zone „C” of environmental protection – in which agricultural, forestry, stock farming and other activities compatible with objectives of environmental protection, stated in the Territorial Plan are allowed. It is imposed as a priority to recover the pre-existent municipal patrimony; new functional buildings are allowed on behalf of agro-tourist and agro-forestry activities, compatible with the capitalization objectives proposed by the Park.

◆ zone „D” of pre-park – corresponds to the urban and urbanizable territory located within the park area, in accordance with the Regional Law no.20/2000. The Territorial Plan of the Park defines the limits and terms of urbanization for this area, in accordance with the general and particular objectives of the park.

◆ contiguous area – the area that is not included in the park, on the one hand having a role transition between the protected and unprotected areas and on the other hand a role in connecting it with the actual territory of the park. The Territorial Plan of the park states the conditions for environmental support for such a zone.

Besides these, the Territorial Plan of the Park: establishes the final perimeter of the park for the zones A, B, C, D and the contiguous area; establishes the interventions towards preservation, restoration and re-qualification as well as the dispositions on preservation of the biodiversity, landscapes and cultural objects; individualizes the system of services and infrastructure at public’s disposal and also the new infrastructure foreseen in the land planning documents for regional and provincial scale; it determines the social usage of the park for scientific, cultural and recreational purpose; individualizes the regulations for productive activities and services which, in harmony with the objectives of the park, can assure the social-economic development of the park territory.

Any waste storage and recovery is forbidden within all the zones of the park as well as in the contiguous area. Mining and extractive activities are forbidden in zones A, B, C and D.

With regard to the wild flora preservation, the Plan of the Park has as a major objective not only the preservation of present population’s genetic biodiversity but also the protection of habitats that are essential for their survival and reproduction. In this respect, the Park promotes scientific research, census and monitoring of the species. Catching, killing, harming or disturbing wild fauna is forbidden all over the park territory.

The sanctions applied in the protected areas of the Emilia-Romagna Region, according to Regional Law no.6/2005, come to sums between: 25-

250 euro for the case of extirpation or abandonment of a vegetal specie protected by national and regional legislation or other legal provision on protected areas; 500-5,000 euro/wild animal if it is caught or killed, protected by dint of the same laws; 250-2,500 euro for implementing activities, actions or interventions that do not entail geo-morphological transformations; 2,000-20,000 euro for implementing activities, actions or interventions that entail geo-morphological transformations but also for forbidden municipal actions and building of new streets; 2,000-20,000 euro for damaging, disturbing or altering of the natural and semi-natural habitats or the animal and vegetal species habitats, protected by Directive no.92/43/EEC.

### **The Regional Park of Upper Modenese Appennines**

There are 29 protected areas in the Emilia-Romagna Region, out of which 2 national parks, 13 regional parks and 14 natural reservations.

In Italy, the national parks belong to the VI IUCN category (The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) and act according to the statute of this particular category.

The Upper Modenese Appennines Regional Park is also known as the *Frignano Regional Park*, after the historical name of this mountainous region. It is situated in the central-south part of the Emilia-Romagna Region, to the South of the Province of Modena, in the mountains with the same name. The highest peak is Monte Cimone, 2165 m high.

The park was set up by the Regional Law no.11/1988. It has a surface of 15,352 hectares (out of which 6,518 hectares for the pre-park zone) and stretches over the territory of 7 communes of the Modena Province. The territory of the park consists of several zones with different protection levels (fig.1). Such are the zones A (of integral protection) and A1 (of special protection), which include the most precious and fragile habitats. Together they sum up 367 hectares and are situated on the sides of Giovo, Rondinaio, Libro Aperto and Spigolino Mountains, but they also include the San Geminiano peat bog and Porticciola and Pratignano Lakes. Zone B (of general protection) is the largest (over 7,600 hectares) and zone C (of environmental protection) takes up 700 hectares. The pre-park zone is a strip that surrounds the northern part of the park and includes the anthropized territory [3], [6].

The headquarters of the park is located in the mountain village Pievepelago, outside the protected zone and so is the Administrative Office of the park. The employees of this institution deal with organizing and guarding the park. The park police, who have the authority to sanction the trespassers, inspect the park on daily basis.

The park is superposed over a region remarkably beautiful from the geographic point of view, where ridges, glacial cirques, valleys and lakes, moraines can be seen everywhere. That is why the park is an important tourist attraction in summer as well as for winter sports. At its turn, the great number of tourists demands severe rules for environment protection.

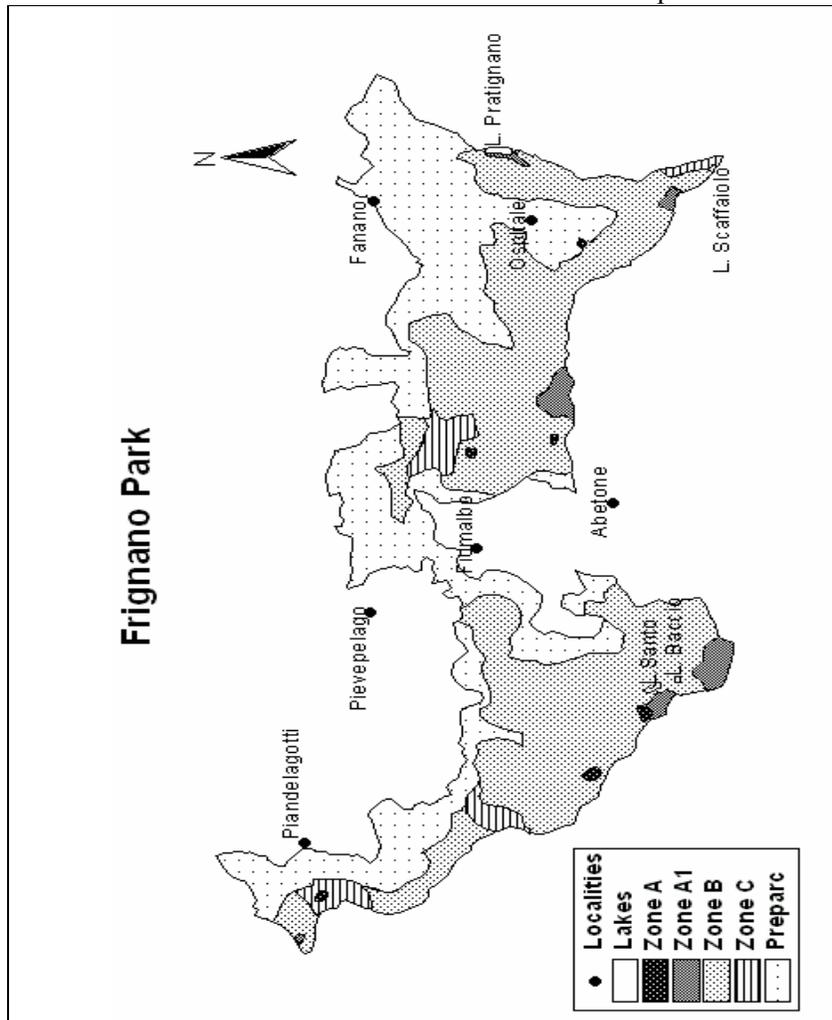


Fig. 1. The zones with different protection levels in Frignano Regional Park (processing by [3]).

On the Frignano Regional Park territory, the *Park Regulation* (according to Law no.6/2005), stipulates the activities allowed in the park and pre-park zone and the ways they must be accomplished conformably to the provisions, prescriptions and directives comprised in the Park Plan. Therefore the Regulation makes reference to: the development of the

traditional craftsmanship, commercial, services and agrosilvopastoral activities; the stay or circulation of the public by any means of transport; the development of any sports, recreational and educational activities; the development of scientific research activities; the limit of sound, light or any other kinds of emissions, in accordance with the specific legislation in force; the development of voluntary activities; the access on the park territory along pathways specially assigned for disabled and older people.

It is strictly forbidden, on the entire park territory: to capture, kill, damage, disturb the animal species; to pick and destroy the vegetal species, except the areas where agrosilvopastoral activities are allowed; to insert foreign animal or vegetal species that might endanger the natural balance; to start quarries; to collect minerals and fossils; to change the waters regime; to perform advertising activities outside the urban centres, without the park's permission; to bring in unauthorized weapons, explosives; to use fire on the park territory etc.

Also, the visitors must not pick mushrooms and berries until they pay the permit fee and within the periods these activities are allowed. The tourists must report to the park management any situation that requires their intervention. They must show respect for the locals' culture and activities and must not trespass private properties or crop fields.

Throughout the Frignano Park the following animal and vegetal species are protected: marmot, wolf, wild cat, mouflon, wild boar, stag, deer, badger, otter, fox, temporary frog, snow mouse, common adder, alpine triton, royal eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), hen hawk, royal owl, sparrow hawk, house martin, wood-pecker, little owl, partridge, „Apollo of Alpi Mountains” butterfly (*Parnassius apollo*), rhododendron, red bilberry, Koch's gentian (*Gentiana kochiana*), star gentian (*Swertia perennis*), blue alpine daisy (*Aster alpinus*), narcissus anemone (*Anemone narcissiflora*), Tuscan honeysuckle (*Saxifraga etrusca*) and many other.

Frignano Park includes 2 protected areas, established based on the Networking Programme “Nature 2000”, by the decree from 5 of July 2007. It is about *Monte Cimone-Libro Aperto-Lago Pratignano* and *Monte Rondinaio-Monte Giovo*. The protection of biodiversity and habitats is very important here. There are several species of special community interest: wolf, royal eagle, snow mouse, hawk, polecat, temporary frog, alpine triton and many other species [6].

Many “*Visit Centres*” all over the protected areas in Italy, are at visitors' disposal and provide information about tourist objectives to be visited, tourist routes, history, culture and traditions, protected flora and fauna, the regulations in the protected area, as well as all recreational, scientific or educational activities performed in the protected area, on environment protection, natural sciences or other fields (exhibitions,

ecological education classes, festivals, hiking opportunities, cycling competitions, skiing etc.). The information can be given either by volunteers or by employees who have a role in coordinating the tourists. Some more activities held here are conferences, symposiums on environment issues or clubs meetings on natural sciences field that all tourists may attend. *We point out that setting up such centres on the protected areas territory in Romania, would be really useful as they have an important educational role for tourists.*

In the Frignano Regional Park there are the Visit Centres „Cà Silvestro” in Fiumalbo village and „Due Ponti” in Fanano village, for local and foreign tourists. There are also a few Visit Points and Tourist Information Offices, where the visitors can get information about the tourist offers or activities in the park.

## CONCLUSIONS

In Emilia-Romagna Region, according to Regional Law no.6/ February 17, 2005, five categories of protected areas were approved and in addition, the areas proposed by the EU in the Networking Programme “Nature 2000”. The regional parks comprise five territorial zones: A, B, C, D and the contiguous area, the first two being regarded as zones of maximum protection and the others with lower protection measures.

Many “Visit Centres” all over the protected areas in Italy are at visitors` disposal and provide information about tourism and ecology and the tourists can take part in recreational, scientific and educational activities. Setting up such centres on the protected areas territory in Romania, would be really useful as they have an important educational role for tourists.

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