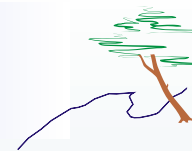




Protection and Management of Coastal Habitats in Latvia



The area of the project is the entire sea coast of Latvia - an approximately 300 m wide belt beginning from the sea line in the terrestrial direction. The sea coast in Latvia extends over 490 km.

A threatened habitat can be found in almost every part of the sea coast of Latvia. Most of these habitats are not found outside of the 300 m belt. The most endangered habitats are sandy beaches, embryonic, white and grey dunes as well coastal meadows and boreal forests. Most of the habitats are particularly sensitive and attractive for recreation; meadows and grey dunes are decreasing as a result of overgrowing and tree planting.

The project «Protection and Management of Coastal Habitats in Latvia» aims at direct conservation measures for 23 habitat types listed in Habitats Directive, and 9 habitat types according to the Bern Convention, 4 Habitats Directive Annex II species, 1 Bern Convention species, and 16 Birds Directive Annex I species (2 of them priority).



Photo: Kārlis Kalviškis

The greater part of the coastal protection belt likely will become NATURA 2000 sites by accession of Latvia in European Union because of its outstanding biological diversity and unmodified complex of habitats of Community importance.

Between 1945 and 1990, access to the seashore was restricted, because the western boundary of Latvia was also the border of the USSR. Access was allowed only in particular locations. While this system degraded the traditional economical and cultural environment, it ensured that natural habitats were protected and that building was restricted in the largest part of the coast, in contrast with most of the European countries. These restrictions were removed after renewal of independence in 1991.

Now, the number of visitors in the sea coast is growing exponentially. Natural habitats suffer both from the activities of tourists and from the inappropriate management. Impact to coastal habitats is increasing, causing destruction of ecosystem structure and promoting erosion. The number of visitors has particularly increased in individual seashore stretches. For example, the number of visitors to Kolka rags (Cape of Kolka) in summer has increased from 2000 in 1995 to 20 000 in 1999.



Photo: Brigita Laimē

Main threats to the coastal habitats in Latvia are:

- Decrease in area of endangered habitats due to inappropriate management.
- Degradation of coastal natural habitats by recreation and activities of tourism.
- Deterioration of endangered habitats in protected nature areas due to lack of management plans.



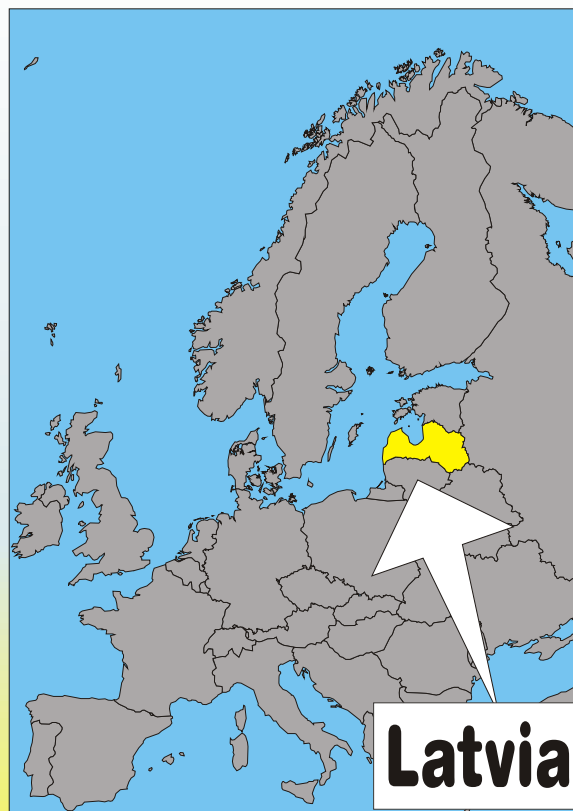
In the LIFE-Nature project "Protection and management of coastal habitats in Latvia", following main actions are planned:

- Inventorying and mapping of habitats of EU importance in the project area;
- Planning of the appropriate protection and management measures in protected nature areas where there currently are no management plans;
- Implementation of management measures in areas with large and increasing visitor activity (construction and installation of footpaths, wooden bridges, fences, barriers, establishing of resting places for visitors, parking places as well 2 bird-watch towers);
- Restoration and maintenance of coastal meadows;
- Restoration of grey dunes in areas where immediate protection actions are required;
- Removal of aggressive alien plant species (in some areas where they are rapidly expanding in distribution and destroying indigenous flora);
- Dissemination of information about threatened coastal habitats of Community importance and their protection.

Project duration: 01.04.2002 - 31.12.2005.
Project funding: 2 270 860 Euro.

Project manager:
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Partners:
North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve
Liepāja Regional Environmental Board



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LIFE-Nature project



PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COASTAL HABITATS IN LATVIA



Photo: Brigita Laime