
NOTES AND TOPICS

Volunteers for Nature Protection: Examples from Bavaria

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Nature conservation in Australia has normally been a responsibility of the public sector. Almost all of the areas of protected natural ecosystems in Australia are owned and managed by public-sector agencies such as the State National Park and Wildlife Services and Forestry Commissions. Traditionally, such government involvement has been thought necessary because many of the benefits provided by protected natural areas have public-good characteristics that make private-sector provision unprofitable. Yet initiatives in the German State of Bavaria suggest that private-sector clubs and associations can successfully secure conservation benefits for the community in a cost-effective manner.

Public Sector Involvement

It should be said at once that the public sector is heavily involved in nature conservation in Bavaria. The State government closely controls the allocation of land for all purposes, and federal and European Union laws significantly affect land-use decisions.

Nature protection is promoted by two land classifications: *Naturschutzgebiet* (Nature Protection Area) and *Nationalpark* (National Park). A *Naturschutzgebiet* (NSG) maintains a specific ecosystem in its current state because of its natural beauty or because it provides a habitat for plants and animals. Once designated as an NSG, an area, no matter who owns it, is subject to a decree that sets out the land-use practices that are compatible with its status and hence permitted. A decree may limit the scale and intensity of agriculture (for instance, by limiting fertilizer application) or even regulate routine land-management practices (for instance, by stipulating the period within which mowing of pastures for silage is permitted).

The *Nationalpark* (NP) classification protects areas of environmental significance but also makes them available for research and recreation. Bavaria's two NPs — *Nationalpark Berchtesgaden* and *Nationalpark Bayerischer Wald* — are State-owned, but the law permits privately owned areas to be designated NPs. Some land within NP *Berchtesgaden* is under perpetual lease to farmers who continue to graze the land, although under tightly controlled conditions.

As of September 1993, the total area of NSGs in Bavaria was 138,565ha, making up 1.96 per cent of the total land area. The two NPs accounted for 34,000ha (0.48 per cent).

Although some of the opportunity cost of the restricted land-use practices allowed by the NSG decrees is deemed by the government to be the 'social responsibility' of the land-owner, generous compensation payments are made to those affected. In addition, the government is obliged to pay some of the costs of landscape management in the NSGs, especially in cases where the private owner ceases to farm an area.

The government is also involved in buying land for nature protection purposes. Purchases are made not only from the budget of the environment ministry but also from the *Naturschutzfond* (Nature Protection Fund, or NSF). This is a capital fund of approximately DM25m (A\$21.3m), established in the mid-1980s and managed by the government. The yearly income from the fund, together with any funds contributed by private sources, is used to buy land for nature protection. In 1992, the NSF contributed DM665,000 for land acquisition; a figure in excess of DM2m was projected for 1993. In 1992, the ministry paid DM3.1m directly from its budget for land purchases.

The State government disburses funds from the NSF in close collaboration with *Landkreise* (local councils) and with the private sector. The *Landkreise* submit proposals for purchasing land for conservation to the Bavarian government. Upon approval, the State contributes 50 per cent of the price on average. Areas deemed to be of special significance may attract up to 66 per cent funding by the State.

Private Sector Involvement

Private initiatives for nature protection in Bavaria are wide ranging and involve varying degrees of cooperation with the government.

Most closely associated with the government are those private activities that complement the work being undertaken in the NPs. Although this is only at an early stage of development, park managers have sought to use voluntary labour for specific tasks in their parks. 'Voluntary' work has sometimes been paid for by private corporation sponsorship. The German section of the Federation of Nature and National Parks of Europe (FNNPE), a private non-profit organisation, aims to coordinate the management activities of the NPs and to facilitate private sponsorship of NP projects (the enabling legislation for the NPs prohibits direct sponsoring). Hence the FNNPE acts as a clearing house for commercial sponsoring. For example, the computer systems at NP *Berchtesgaden* have been provided by IBM and this is given recognition in the park's visitor centre.

The *Deutscher Alpenverein* (German Alpine Club, or the DAV) also works closely with the government, but in a very different way. It is a large organisation with over half a million members throughout Germany and an annual fee revenue base of DM14m. Its activities include the teaching of climbing skills, alpine rescue services and lobbying the government on environmental issues. Especially important is the DAV's involvement in management of the alpine regions. This involve-

ment takes two forms: the construction and maintenance of paths and signs in alpine areas (which are owned largely by the government), and the operation of a network of alpine huts (which are owned by the DAV). DAV members undertake these tasks on a voluntary basis, except for the provision of hospitality services at the huts. The DAV allows a 'hut-server' to sell food and beverages at the hut in return for the collection of the accommodation fee and the general maintenance of the buildings. The operation of the huts is strictly monitored by the government, especially for their environmental impacts. Some huts have been closed because they failed to meet government waste-water quality requirements or because the DAV lacked the funds to improve the facilities of all their huts within a short time period.

Other nature protection associations in Bavaria have a more direct interest in the provision of land specifically for nature protection. The most important of these are the *Bund Naturschutz in Bayern* (Bavarian Nature Protection Association, or the BN) and the *Landesbund für Vogelschutz in Bayern E.V. — Verband für Arten- und Biotopschutz* (Bavarian Bird Protection Society, or the LBV). The BN has 105,000 members in Bavaria. Its annual membership fee revenue base is DM4.5m, but it has total funds available of DM10m (including donations, bequests and fines directed by local courts to the BN). The LBV has about 35,000 members and 12,000 'sponsors' who often contribute more than the membership fee but do not wish to be members. Its membership fee revenue is DM1.6m; other sources of funds bring the total funds available for spending to DM3.5m.

Both the BN and the LBV buy land for nature protection purposes. As with the local councils, the government provides funding for, on average, half the purchase price. The BN currently owns approximately 1,100ha and leases a further 700ha, allocating in the order of DM600,000 to DM800,000 annually to the task. The LBV owns about 800ha and a further 800ha of leases. It currently devotes approximately DM650,000 annually to land acquisition.

The two associations manage their land differently. The LBV encourages its members and the public to visit its reserves (except where the ecology is fragile) by providing guided tours and/or information boards. The BN does not encourage visitors. Both organisations rely on members to provide voluntary labour for management tasks, although some of the non-labour costs of management are subsidised by the government. The LBV in some cases leases back land to farmers who contract to manage it in a manner that is compatible with the LBV's goals. Where the government has partly funded the land acquisition, the organisation agrees to devote the land to nature protection and to allow it to revert to government ownership should the association cease to exist.

The DAV owns land that is used for conservation purposes. In fact, it is the largest private land-owner in Austria, through its holding of 30,000ha adjacent to NP *Hohe Tauern* in the Austrian Alps.

Making Voluntary Associations Work

The success of private involvement in nature protection depends very largely on the ability of voluntary associations to attract and keep members. How do they do it?

Possibly the most important factor is the groups' common organisational structure. A relatively small central coordinating headquarters is combined with a host of sub-groups that provide the focus of most activity. The DAV, for example, is made up of 320 sections, each responsible for a specific region of the Alps. The BN is organised into groups, each centred on a particular *Landkreis*. These groups may have anything from 1,500 to 12,000 members, but they are in turn broken down into smaller groups based at the suburb, town or village level, where membership may range from five to 300. The LBV is similarly divided into 350 groups with between ten and 3,500 members.

So despite their overall size, the Bavarian associations operate through small groups, which, by mobilising peer pressure, motivate their members for action and discourage free-riding behaviour. As well, personal pride in achieving goals is encouraged by assigning responsibilities for particular tasks to specific groups. This practical focus of group activities has proved to be a very attractive feature of membership.

The Bavarian associations encourage membership also by providing non-collective goods. The DAV, for example, grants its members access to the club's network of alpine huts at special rates, and provides them with alpine transportation, rescue services and mountaineering tuition. All the clubs are increasingly involved in merchandising: tee-shirts and stickers help create the images that encourage membership.

Nevertheless, the associations are very largely an adjunct to government action. And they are relatively small. For instance, the BN in Bavaria has been able to recruit about 2 per cent of the population, whereas ADAC, the German motoring association, commands a membership of about 25 per cent.

Australian Applications

The Bavarian experience suggests that private-sector organisations are capable of a wide variety of nature-protection activities that can complement the actions of the public sector.

Australian evidence that privatisation of national parks is not only feasible but cost-effective exists in the form of Earth Sanctuaries Limited. This private company operates two nature reserves in South Australia (Warrawong in the Adelaide Hills and Yookamurra between the Barossa Valley and the Murray) and one in western New South Wales (Scotia, north of Wentworth). According to its prospectus, Earth Sanctuaries aims to ensure the survival of Australia's native flora and fauna within a commercial environment. Using eco-tourism as its source of income, the company has been able to raise equity funding to maintain an active expansion program that involves the purchase of land, while earning operating profits in its established reserves. This success has been achieved without government subsidies.

The management of Australia's national parks could be selectively privatised. The government could put the implementation of the plan of management out to tender and monitor the performance of the successful bidder. Competition between bidders would ensure that the goals of the plan of management would be realised in the most cost-effective manner.

Clubs and associations could be encouraged to purchase areas for nature protection purposes. Governments could direct funds allocated to conservation organisations away from untied grants and towards the subsidisation of land purchases. They could invite selected associations to put forward proposals for areas of land to be protected, vet the proposals, and allocate funds to supplement money raised by the associations for the purchases. Ownership of the areas so purchased would be vested in the associations but specific covenants could be included on the titles to limit land use to nature protection. This mechanism would inject some market discipline into the process of adding to the stock of nature protection areas.

A system of nature protection that takes advantage of the strengths of both the private and the public sectors would ensure that the limited resources available for nature protection are used to best advantage.

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Are Tobacco Taxes Too High?

Robert Albon

Governments have intervened in various ways in the production, sale and consumption of tobacco products. Perhaps some of these interventions are in the public interest as usually interpreted, but some may reflect political correctness, pressure from special interests and a preoccupation with costs. Recently some rather draconian proposals have emerged, including blanket bans in pubs, restaurants and clubs, and even the suggestion that smoking, which is already subject to the highest tax rate of any commodity (about 190 per cent), be taxed at an infinite rate (that is, banned).

A balanced debate on smoking would exhibit the following three characteristics:

- Recognition that there are benefits to smokers, measured by what smokers are prepared to pay to smoke. To assume otherwise is inconsistent with the principles of a free society. Many observations on smoking are based solely on