

MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE RODNA MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK AND BIOSPHERE RESERVE

Executive summary

The Rodna Mountains National Park is a protected area established through the ministerial order no. 7/1990 and confirmed by law no. 5/2000 with the status of national park and the aim to conserve biodiversity and landscapes, to protect rare and valuable species, to promote and encourage tourism and public awareness, and to educate the public in the spirit of protecting nature and its values.

In agreement with modern conservation principles, the management plan integrates the conservation of biodiversity with the development goals of local communities, taking into account traditional, cultural and spiritual characteristics of the region.

This management plan represents the reference document for the Administration of Rodna Mountains NP over the next five years and forms the basis to which all planning and activities undertaken in the park must refer.

The plan was developed through a participatory process involving all stakeholders in meetings of the park's Consultative Council of Administration and the Scientific Council, as well as through other meetings of working groups set up to analyse various management themes. In addition, emphasis was placed on attracting students from local schools within project „Youth Participation in Protected Area Management in Rodna Mountains, Romania” funded by the Darwin Initiative UK.

The **purpose of the Rodna Mountains NP**, as outlined through this management plan, is:

“Maintaining physical-geographic elements in a natural state, protecting ecosystems, conserving genetic resources and biological diversity, and encouraging and supporting the traditional lifestyle of local communities from the park area”.

Structure of the management plan

The management plan includes seven chapters and several annexes (maps, tables and figures, the Red List of species from the park, a description of tourist trails from the park, the park rules and regulations, bibliography and other supportive documents). The first chapter begins by presenting the legal basis for this management plan and describes the process through which it was developed and how it can be modified.

Chapter two includes a description of the park, from its location in the northern part of the Eastern Carpathians and resources available to the park administration for its management, to a presentation of the park's boundaries and its internal zoning. This chapter also presents the physical-geographic characteristics of the park, its flora and vegetation, fauna, ecosystems and habitats, as well as past and present land use in this region, tourism facilities and resources available for education and research.

The park overlaps almost entirely the Rodna Mountains and has an area of 46,399 ha. The internal zoning includes three areas with different management

regimes, from no intervention to sustainable use of resources: strict protection zone (11.7%), integral protection area (57%) and buffer zone (31.3%). The region presents a diverse geo-morphology, climate and several soil types that lead to a rich plant diversity. The flora found here includes Euro Asian species (36.7%), central European species (8.1%) and a few Mediterranean (4.6%) and continental elements (1.4%). There are several endemic species, as well as rare and threatened species that are protected. The vegetation includes 72 associations, of which 22 were described for the first time in these mountains. The fauna diversity is equally rich with 2000 species inventoried so far. However, several invertebrate taxa have not been studied in the park yet. Numerous species are rare and threatened and have therefore been included in the Red List.

The park includes all major ecosystems typical for a mountain environment, but dominant are forests (60%), followed by alpine pastures with dwarf pine (30%) and a less representative alpine layer (the highest peak in the park being Pietrosu at 2303m).

The major uses of land in this area are grazing in the alpine pastures in the summer and forestry. In the past mining also played an important role and was a great source of income for local communities. The land included in the park is owned mainly by local communities (both forests and pastures) and is administered by their own structures, with some land left in state ownership and administered by the Romanian Forest Administration RNP-Romsilva. The great number of land owners and administrators represents a challenge for the Administration of Rodna Mountains NP who strives to create and maintain an open and efficient communication.

With respect to tourism, this park offers visitors the possibility to enjoy a diversity of activities: recreation, mineral water therapy (spas), horse-back riding, cultural tourism, and rural, agro-tourism.

Chapter three presents the park's purpose and the management themes and objectives. These themes and objectives are:

1. Management of biodiversity and landscapes

- I. Conserving natural habitats and increasing or at least maintaining plant and animal populations at their current level
- II. Maintaining and conserving geological and geo-morphological characteristics, landscape specificity, dynamics and beauty

2. Sustainable management of natural resources

- I. Regulating and monitoring activities undertaken inside the park to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources

3. Promoting public awareness and education

- I. Improving public awareness of and education on the park values

4. Promoting traditions and local customs

- I. Conserving local cultural inheritance, and representative traditions and customs

5. Tourism management

- I. Promoting a type of tourism that will lead to visitors' increased appreciation of park values, that will include local cultural and traditional characteristics and will bring income without negatively impacting the park

6. Administrative management and sustainability

I. Meeting park objectives through professional and integrated management

7. Monitoring the management plan of action

I. Developing a system for monitoring environmental and management achievements

II. Improving the monitoring and control system at park level

8. Ecological reconstruction

I. Reconstruction of degraded natural habitats

9. Management elements specific for the biosphere reserve

I. Adapting the current biosphere reserve to the requirements of MAB UNESCO

Chapter four analyses the management themes and objectives by taking into account the information provided in chapter two and the purpose and goals of the park. The conclusions drawn in this chapter form the basis for the action plan that was developed for the management of the park.

Chapter five presents the current situation of the existing biosphere reserve, the requirements of the MAB UNESCO, and how these can be addressed. It emphasises the fact that, currently, the biosphere reserve does not correspond to modern roles and zoning of such reserves and there is great need for its expansion and the development of a separate management plan for it.

Chapter six details the budget and resources needed for the management of the Rodna Mountains NP and chapter seven details the action plan developed for the five years that this management plan addresses. The action plan details for each management theme and objectives a list of activities that are necessary for their achievement, together with specific targets, priorities, timeframe and potential partners identified to assist implementation.