



VDN/B. Stiegel

The Association of German Nature Parks (VDN)

104 Nature Parks cover 27 per cent of Germany. Nature Parks have four objectives: nature conservation, recreation and soft tourism, environmental education and sustainable regional development.

In accordance with the Federal Nature Conservation Act, the VDN wants to promote the development of Nature Parks to model regions where a high quality of life and recreation goes hand in hand with nature and landscape conservation.



VDN/L. Lücke

Benefits

The advantages for Nature Parks in taking part in the Quality Campaign are manifold:

Systematic data collection as an important starting point for further improvements

Analysis of strengths/weaknesses and recommendations for the future strategic development

Consultancy service and exchange platform through a peer review system (Quality Scouts) and the VDN

Improvement of the collaboration with regional actors

Strengthening of the Nature Park's image

Greater support for Nature Parks by the private sector, political decision-makers and the general public

Better basis for fundraising

Improvement of the Nature Park management



QUALITY MATTERS! THE GERMAN NATURE PARK QUALITY CAMPAIGN



VDN/K. Triebel

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"Let's dare to see things as they really are."

Albert Schweitzer



Objectives

The Quality Campaign is a voluntary instrument for German Nature Parks to improve continuously their work by self-assessment. It provides guidance for the management of resources, offers a strengths/weaknesses-analysis and supports the continuous improvement of Nature Park work.

The Quality Campaign was developed by the VDN, in close cooperation with the Nature Parks. The conception of the campaign was financially supported by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU).

By signing the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), Germany has committed itself to contribute to the establishing of a global network of representative and effectively managed national and regional protected areas. The Quality Campaign helps to achieve this objective and supports the effective implementation of the CBD in Germany.

Procedure

The core element of the campaign is the Criteria Catalogue which is divided into two parts. The first one is the 'Nature Park Fact File', which records general information about the park but is not part of the assessment. The second part consists of a comprehensive set of scored assessment questions referring to five different topics:

- Management and Organisation
- Nature Protection and Landscape Conservation
- Recreation and Sustainable Tourism
- Environmental Education and Communication
- Sustainable Regional Development

For each section, a maximum of 100 credits is awarded, which leads to a number of 500 achievable points in total. The participation in the campaign is voluntary and free of charge.

Evaluation

The completed questionnaire is pre-analysed by the VDN and the Nature Park is hereupon evaluated by specially trained "Quality Scouts".

Quality Scouts are employees of Nature Parks who act as evaluators and consultants at the same time. The Quality Scouts are selected and trained by the VDN.

On the basis of the Criteria Catalogue, the Quality Scout and the staff of the Nature Park discuss strengths and weaknesses and possible future strategic enhancements in a counselling interview.

Moreover, this procedure gives the opportunity to Nature Park actors, to share best-practice examples and exchange experiences.



The final rating and the results concerning the different assessed criteria are exclusively communicated to the Nature Park itself. The average scores of all evaluated Parks are published by the VDN.

Awarding

Parks with a score of at least 250 out of 500 possible points and a minimum of 20 points in each of the five areas of work, are certified as "**Quality Nature Parks**".

Parks that do not reach the 250 points are characterised as "**Nature Parks' Quality Campaign Partners**".

The evaluated Nature Parks receive a certificate and are provided with a special label, which they can present on websites and on own publications.

The certification is valid for five years. After this period, the Nature Park has to go through another evaluating process. For each evaluation, the Criteria Catalogue is adapted and the requirements are raised to insure a constant enhancement of Nature Park management.