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Mr. Michael Proschek-Hauptmann
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Dear Mr. Proschek-Hauptmann,

I would like to apologise for late response to your query regarding the installation of wind turbines in the close vicinity of the National Park Thayatal (Austria).

I reviewed all the information about this project available on Czech websites and would like to point out that, from WCPA's point of view, the use of any renewable energy is to be considered in a positive light provided the locations do not have any negative impacts on the ecosystem and above all, on protected areas. The installation of wind turbines in forest areas is therefore to be considered with care.

In the concrete example of the National Park Thayatal, and that of the neighboring National Park Podyji, Czech Republic, the plan is to set up wind turbines in the close neighborhood of protected areas, including a European protected area. The particular height and number of turbines (I counted more than 30 of them) are most likely to have a significant impact on the protected areas along the Thaya River, especially on the populations of birds and bats, but also mammals. It is not only a physical threat to the fauna through the turbines, experience has also shown that numerous species avoid areas where such a concentration of similar turbines are found. A migration of species might have been disrupted along the migration routes through the two valuable protected areas. Both National Parks are characterized by an interesting avifauna and a high density of bats, which are precisely those species that react very sensitively to wind turbines. One should also consider negative scenic effects of such developments on the landscape values of the two protected areas.

On behalf of WCPA I therefore recommend to carry out detailed evaluations (over a longer period of time) before implementing the wind-turbines project, in particular with regards to bird and bat populations. The interaction between both National Parks, their role in providing so called „stepping stones“ in the green corridor line, should be studied with particular attention. Involvement of international experts with knowledge on IUCN protected area standards would be highly recommended.

The system of IUCN Protected Area categories is based on the management objectives, especially on the primary management objective. This means that all other objectives in the protected area concerned, can only be applied if these are not diminishing or in opposition to the primary management objective.

Primary management objective for IUCN Category II Protected Areas is »to protect natural biodiversity along with its underlying ecological structure and supporting environmental processes, and to promote education and recreation«.

Among the principles that should be applied for every protected area is also the following: *»Protected Areas should usually aim to maintain or, ideally, increase the degree of naturalness of the ecosystem being protected«* (Dudley (ed.), 2008: 10). The principles that should be applied to every protected area (Dudley (ed.) 2008: 10) also include that every protected area should *»be of sufficient size to ensure the integrity and long term maintenance of the specified conservation targets or be capable of being increased to achieve this end«*.

IUCN Guidelines (Dudley (ed.), 2008: 37) highlights the importance of connecting protected areas through biological corridors and stepping-stones and insulating them with buffer zones. I am convinced that construction of infrastructure in the area adjacent to the National Park would have negative impact to the preservation of the natural environment between the two National Parks and the green corridor.

After consideration of the above principles and purposes that are valid for every protected area and in particular for IUCN Category II sites, it is clear that setting wind turbines in the vicinity of the two National Parks could lead to further fragmentation of the landscapes which play an important role as biological corridors. It could also influence negatively the primary management objectives of the IUCN cat.II sites.

The IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas is willing first to provide additional guidance and explanation on the use and principles of the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories. The Director of the National Park Thayatal, Robert Brunner, is an expert of WCPA and has distinguished himself with an exemplary implementation of the national park criteria, which is why the National Park Thayatal was one of the first parks to be recognised by a decree of IUCN. I am convinced that neither the National Park, nor the responsible authorities wish to jeopardize this recognition.

WCPA would be pleased to assist also in proposing the names of experts who could provide their opinion about potential impacts of installing wind turbines in close proximity to national parks.

I would appreciate it if you could keep me informed of any further developments.

Yours sincerely,

Andrej Sovinc
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