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COST 729 Mid-term Workshop 2009

Nitrogen Deposition and Natura 2000

Science & practice in determining environmental impacts

18-20 May, 2009
Brussels

Goal

To harmonize approaches for determining the impacts of atmospheric nitrogen deposition on Natura 2000 sites and review the future policy options.



COST 729 - Assessing and Managing nitrogen fluxes in the atmosphere-biosphere system in Europe.

Introduction

The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) is the cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy. It promotes the maintenance of biodiversity and requires Member States to take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats at a favourable conservation status. The Directive establishes the Natura 2000 network with the aim to assure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. The provisions of the Directive require strict site protection measures, avoidance of deterioration and introduce a precautionary approach to permitting "plans or projects" which may have a likely significant effect on a site.

Control of emissions to air of reactive nitrogen are regulated under several directives including, NECD, LCPD, AQD, IPPC. A range of other policies and legislation also influence emissions, such as the Nitrates Directive. However, the impacts of nitrogen deposition on the Natura 2000 network, together with the associated impacts due to elevated concentrations of ammonia (NH_3) and nitrogen oxides (NO_X), are often not addressed adequately or systematically; this is despite the strong protection measures in place through the Habitats Directive.

At present there is no common European approach for determining the impacts of nitrogen deposition on individual sites or on conservation status. This provides key challenges for this workshop; to develop best practices in environmental assessment and decision making, and to inform the needs for future policy development.

The workshop will compare case studies from different European countries, review the scale of the nitrogen threat to Natura 2000 sites and conservation status, linking the science and decision making at local to European scales.

Key Issues

- Pairing national scientists and conservation practitioners
- Considering site-based case studies
- Comparing approaches between countries
- Developing clear messages to improve assessments
- Exploiting cross-compliance and informing future policy
- Communicating the scale of the problem

Workshop Topics

1. Comparison of impact assessment and decision making approaches to determine the N deposition impacts of plans and projects in the context of Habitats Directive Article 6.3 obligations.

2. Comparison of approaches to assessing and reporting N deposition impacts on conservation status (Habitats Directive Article 17) and discussion of harmonising approaches for future reporting rounds.

3. New science on the effects of N deposition and concentrations on Natura 2000 sites, including bio-indicators, effects of N-form (e.g., NH_x vs NO_y), and the relationships between critical thresholds and biodiversity loss.

4. Approaches to modelling local N deposition and concentrations in the regulatory context of Natura 2000.

5. Options for future policy development to manage and mitigate the impacts of N deposition effects on the Natura 2000 network.

Target Participants

Practitioners in nature conservation & environmental regulation

- → Decision makers regarding environmental assessments of nitrogen deposition
- → Regulators and Planners
- → Conservation managers responsible for Natura 2000 / site assessment and assessment of Conservation Status.

Scientific experts in N deposition, impact detection & environmental assessments

- → Experts in emission-dispersion-deposition-assessment
- → Experts in effects of N deposition and concentrations.
- → Policy analysts and communicators

Policy advisers, generalists, and stakeholders (Nitrogen deposition, Biodiversity, Habitats Directive, Nitrogen emissions management)

- → European Commission
- → National Ministries and Agencies
- → Conservation NGOs
- → Source industry representatives

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Venue Details

Brussels
See website for details.

Outputs

- Development of European best practices
- Published book (papers + working group reports)
- Summary leaflet for public dissemination
- Input to policy development process

Advisory Commitee

Christer Ågren (Air Pollution & Climate Secretariat, Sweden)
Albert Bleeker (ECN, The Netherlands)
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Organising Team

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Further Info and Registration:

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NATURA 2000

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