

## *After-LIFE Conservation Plan*

### *1. Introduction.*

Preparation of long-term plans for management and conservation of the sites involved are a major task for all LIFE-Nature projects. As of 2005, all LIFE-Nature projects are obliged to prepare an "After-LIFE Conservation Plan" as a separate deliverable. As this is a new requirement, no standard format has yet been developed.

In this plan, management and conservation activities taking place on the project sites after the project end date are listed. Given the very high number (>350) of individual project areas involved in this project, it is not possible to give a very detailed plan for each area. Instead, the present plan is compiled for each Natura 2000 site (site codes given for each site), and divided according to which entity is currently responsible for the management.

As of January 1 2007, a structural reform enters into force in Denmark, transferring the responsibility for managing privately owned protected areas from the counties (which will be abolished) to new and enlarged municipalities. This of course constitutes a special challenge to all nature management in the country, and also means that long-term management plans have to take the new administrative framework for nature conservation and management into account. The 4 counties participating in the project are however very aware of this special challenge, and have committed resources to developing plans and making agreements which will make the transition more smooth and ensure that efforts initiated by the counties will be continued by the new entities. The new regional agencies of the Ministry of Environment will support the efforts of the municipalities, particularly in the transition period.

The spin-off effect of the project is demonstrated by the fact that both private owners (implemented by the counties) and state forest districts have undertaken similar activities on other dune heath areas, primarily inside Natura 2000 areas, but also on dune heath areas which are for some reason or other not designated as Natura 2000 sites. It is however seen as important to also look at the areas bordering the Natura 2000 sites, as the condition of neighbouring areas has an effect on the conservation status of Natura 2000 areas.

Other than the efforts to maintain a favourable conservation status of the many hectares of dune heath included in the project, several other project activities will be continued and developed further. These are listed in a separate section.

### *2. Site management and dune heath rehabilitation*

As a result of the project activities, the conservation status of around 8000 hectares of dune heath has improved significantly. The challenge now is to maintain the trend towards a favourable conservation status, and one of the important tools in this regard is the Best Management Practice Guidelines, which were prepared by University of Copenhagen and the National Environmental Research Institute under the project (Action F1 and F2). Furthermore, the positive results achieved for amphibians need to be expanded, and to this end the Guidelines prepared under the project will be a very valuable tool.

Site 78 (DK00AY176/ DK009X065/ DK00AY057) Wadden Sea (Rømø and Fanø)

The project areas on Fanø are all state owned. All the areas cleared during the project are included in the general District Management Plan for Oxbøl State Forest District, and the improved conservation status achieved through the project will be maintained, primarily through prescribed burning every 6-10 years. The annual budget (2006) for nature conservation and management in the forest district is around 2,4 mio DKK (323.000 Euro).

The state owned project areas on Rømø, including the hectares acquired as part of the land swap action, are included in a management plan which is currently being developed as part of a revision of the general District Management Plan for Lindet State Forest District. The annual budget for nature conservation and management work in the forest district (2006) is around 633.000 DKK (85.000 Euro). The state owned areas will also be included in the general management plan for the entire Natura 2000 site, developed as a cooperation between many different stakeholders. The northern areas will be manually cleared of tree encroachment at regular intervals, but as the area is very close to a holiday cottage area and the landscape is very undulating, burning and cutting are not feasible management methods. In the southern areas, grazing will be continued on 95 ha by the same stockowner and in the northern areas on 40 ha by a new stockowner. The remaining areas will be maintained by manually removing tree encroachment, and by using a mulcher where possible, at regular intervals.

On Rømø, the project partner Sønderjylland County faced many problems in reaching agreements on management actions with private landowners. Grazing agreements for the areas fenced during the project are valid until 2008. Other areas in private ownership will be grazed as long as the EU subsidies are attractive to the owners. A general management plan for the dune heath areas on the island was developed in 1984 and is still valid. Implementation of the plan depends on the consent of the owners and the financial situation of the county. In 2006, basic threat analysis will be performed, and the data will feed into an overall management plan for site 78 (the Wadden Sea) which will be ready by 2009 at the latest. By 1. January 2007, Sønderjylland County ceases to exist as an administrative body, and the responsibility for managing the privately owned areas will be transferred to a new and enlarged municipality.

Site 72 (DK00AX172) – Lyngbos Hede

The main action taking place on this state owned site during the project was the restoration of natural hydrology by closing a long stretch of an open drainage trench and laying down pipes instead. After the construction work was finished in the spring of 2005, the managing authority, Oxbøl State Forest District, continues to measure the groundwater level and in this way follow up on the preparatory work undertaken in the planning phase for the restoration work. If it appears to be feasible and desirable to expand the closure of the drainage trench, the district will apply for funds for this work from the general nature restoration budget of the ministry. The other management activities undertaken on the site, (clearing and burning), will be maintained through prescribed burning every 6-10 years. The annual budget for nature conservation and management activities in Oxbøl State Forest District (2006) is 2,4 mio DKK (323.000 Euro).

Site 73 (DK00AX173/ DK00AX050) – Kallesmærsk Hede and Fiilsø Hede

The large state owned areas managed by the Armed Forces and the Danish Forest and Nature Agency are included in detailed management plans. The management plan for the areas used by the Armed Forces is currently being revised in cooperation with the Danish Forest and Nature Agency, and the dune heath areas included in the project will be given special attention. Generally, the areas will be managed by prescribed burning every 10 years. Furthermore, the large population of red deer in the area actively prefers foraging in the cleared and burned areas and thus contributes to maintaining the favourable conservation status of the areas. The annual budget

(2006) for nature conservation and management in Oxbøl State Forest District is 2,4 mio DKK (323,000 Euro).

The private areas included in the project are owned by one single large estate. A Conservation Order for the areas was issued in 1958, and the provisions and regulations outlined in this are still valid. As these provisions state that removal of trees and bushes is not allowed, management of the areas cannot take place unless an exemption is granted by the Conservation Board. However, based on a management plan developed in 2003, the exemptions needed in order to implement the project were granted, and future applications for exemptions for further management are not expected to be problematic. By 1. January 2007, Ribe County ceases to exist as an administrative body, and the responsibility for managing the areas will be transferred to a new and enlarged Varde Municipality. However, the present administrators will develop a description of the management undertaken and the future needs foreseen, and hand it over to the new authorities. The owners of the area have declared that, provided that adequate subsidies can be obtained, they are willing to enter into an agreement concerning management by grazing of some of the areas. The County will follow up on this declaration during 2006. Furthermore, basic threat analysis of all Natura 2000-areas in the county will be performed in 2006, including the dune heath areas, and this analysis will feed into an overall management plan for the entire SCI.

#### Site 26 (DK00EX017) – Ålvand Klithede

The grazing agreement for some of the state owned areas expired in 2005, but in the beginning of 2006 these areas will be included in a general round of public invitations to tender. All the state owned areas are included in the management plans for all Natura 2000 sites managed by Thy State Forest District, which will be ready in the beginning of 2006, as part of the overall District Management Plan. The yearly budget for nature management in the district (2006) is 4,3 mio DKK (578.000 Euro), and the Natura 2000 sites have a high priority.

The private dune heath areas on site 26 are included in the Nature Management Plan of Viborg County for 2006. According to this plan, clearing and burning of dune heaths are to continue as a follow-up on the LIFE-supported project. On this particular site, the plan is to burn up to 47,2ha in the spring of 2006. After 1 January 2007, the responsibility for maintaining a favourable conservation status for the privately owned Natura 2000 areas will be transferred to new and enlarged municipalities, in this case Thisted Municipality. During 2006, Viborg County will develop a management plan for the areas included in the project, and it will then be up to the new authorities to implement the plan. But given the good cooperation and dialogue with landowners initiated during the project, and the spin-off management already implemented (47,5 ha dune heath (outside the project areas but inside the Natura 2000 area) have been managed at the request of landowners, and another 22ha will be added in 2006), the prospects are good.

#### Site 184 (DK00EX265) – Dune heaths between Stenbjerg and Lodbjerg

In parallel to the situation for the state owned areas on site 26, management plans for Natura 2000 areas on Thy State Forest District are included in the overall District Management Plan, which will be finalised in the beginning of 2006. The annual (2006) overall budget for nature management in Thy district is 4,3 mio DKK (578.000 Euro). The experience gained during the project with regard to the effect of closing drainage trenches has led to the planning of more closures, as you get a quite remarkable effect from a very small effort.

The private dune heath areas on site 184 are included in the Nature Management Plan of Viborg County for 2006. According to this plan, clearing and burning of dune heaths are to continue as a follow-up on the LIFE-supported project. On this particular site, 35,8ha will be cleared of overgrowth in 2006, and 11 ha will be grazed. Of these, 4,5ha were grazed during the project, but

the owner has agreed to include an additional 6,5 hectares, which were cleared during the project. After 1 January 2007, the responsibility for maintaining a favourable conservation status for the privately owned Natura 2000 areas will be transferred to the new and enlarged Thisted Municipality. During 2006, Viborg County will develop a management plan for the areas included in the project, and it will then be up to the new authorities to implement the plan. But given the good cooperation and dialogue with landowners initiated during the project, and the spin-off management already implemented (1ha has been cleared of overgrowth at the request of the landowner), the prospects are good.

#### Site 185 (DK00EX266) - Lild Strand

During project implementation, the private area included in the project was sold to the National Forest and Nature Agency, and is therefore now the responsibility of Thy State Forest District. However, a spin-off effect has been recorded on other private dune heath areas close to the site, as a landowner requested the assistance of the county for managing 3,5 ha of dune heath. After 1 January 2007, the responsibility for maintaining a favourable conservation status for the privately owned Natura 2000 areas will be transferred to the new and enlarged Thisted Municipality. It will therefore be up to the new authorities to maintain the good cooperation with landowners in the area. But given the good cooperation and dialogue with landowners initiated during the project, and the spin-off management already implemented (13,5 ha outside the project areas have been managed at the request of landowners), the prospects are good.

After the purchase of the small previously privately owned project area on this site, all project areas are now state owned and under the management of Thy State Forest District. The annual budget (2006) for nature management and restoration in Thy district is 4,3 mio DKK (578.000 Euro). The area will be included in the overall District Management Plan, which is currently undergoing a revision and will be ready in 2006.

#### Site 16 (DK00EY124) - Bulbjerg

The private project areas on this site are included in the Nature Management Plan for Viborg County for 2006. According to this plan, clearing and burning of dune heaths are to continue as a follow-up on the LIFE-supported project. On this particular site, grazing of 3,1 ha will be continued, and overgrowth of *Salix* sp. will be cut down if needed. Furthermore, amphibian habitats will be restored in 2006. After 1 January 2007, the responsibility for maintaining a favourable conservation status for the privately owned Natura 2000 areas will be transferred to new and enlarged municipalities, in this case Thisted Municipality. During 2006, Viborg County will develop a management plan for the areas included in the project, and it will then be up to the new authorities to implement the plan. But given the good cooperation and dialogue with landowners initiated during the project, and the fact that conservation officers now working in the County will be transferred to the Municipality, the prospects are good.

The state owned areas on site 16 are the responsibility of Thy State Forest District. The management activities undertaken during the project will be followed up and maintained as part of the overall nature management strategy included in the District Management Plan, which is currently undergoing a revision and will be ready in the spring of 2006. The annual budget for nature management and restoration in Thy district (2006) is 4,3 mio DKK (578.000 Euro). In 2005, the forest district had to terminate the leasing contracts for grazing on some of the areas, but the grazing areas are included in the general round of invitations to tender in the spring of 2006. It is expected that the areas will be grazed again from May 2006.

#### Site 13 (DK00FX121) – Svinkløv

All project areas on this site are state owned and managed by Thy State Forest District. The management actions undertaken during the project will be followed up and maintained as an integrated part of the overall nature management strategy for the forest district as outlined in the District Management Plan which is currently undergoing revision and will be ready in the spring of 2006. Unfortunately the forest district was forced to terminate the grazing agreements for grazing of some of the areas in 2005, due to failure to comply with the provisions of the contract on the part of the tenant, but the areas are included in the general round of invitations to tender in the spring of 2006, and it is expected that the areas will be grazed again from May 2006. The annual budget for nature management and restoration in Thy district (2006) is 4,3 mio DKK (578.000 Euro).

#### Site 193 (DK00FX274) – Ejstrup Klit

The major part of his state owned area is used for military training grounds, mainly for target practice by the air force. A management plan has been drawn up (before the project), but due to the risk of stepping on unexploded ammunition, large areas are more or less inaccessible. The site is relatively undisturbed, and the management actions necessary are limited. However, two small patches of dense overgrowth were not cleared during the project implementation, and these will be cleared in 2006, just as follow-up clearings will take place at regular intervals. Activities to improve the conditions for amphibians will also be initiated in 2006. A specific heathland management plan for the area will be drawn up as part of the new District Management Plan for Nordjylland State Forest District. The annual budget for nature management in the forest district (2006) is 2,45 mio DKK (330,000 Euro).

#### Site 2 (DK00FX005) - Råbjerg Mile

In 2007, the responsibility for the management of the private areas is transferred from the County to the new, enlarged Frederikshavn municipality. This includes the obligations to ensure that the nature conservation obligations are fulfilled and the management efforts followed up. A detailed conservation plan has been developed by the County, and the new Frederikshavn Municipality has agreed to follow the plan closely. Some of the personnel currently working with nature conservation in the County will be transferred to the new municipality, which will contribute to ensuring that the efforts are maintained. A very important feature of the conservation plan is the underlining of the importance of recurring management, and the conservation plan is therefore described as a 4-year cycle of management efforts, according to the specific needs of each sub-area, including the time of year most suitable and recommendations for the use of machinery and methods. The costing of the efforts until 2010 have been set at 429.000 DKK (57.600 Euro) for the conservation works on a total of 639 ha in 4 years.

The state owned areas are included in the general District Management Plan for Nordjylland State Forest District, which is currently undergoing revision. All Natura 2000 sites in the district will be given special attention, and specific management plans will be drawn up for the dune heath areas, based on the experience gained during the project. The yearly budget for nature management in Nordjylland State Forest District (2006) is 2,45 mio DKK (330.000 Euro).

#### Site 10 (DK00FX118) - Højsande, Læsø

All the project areas on this site are state owned, and as such included in the general District Management Plan for Nordjylland State Forest District. This plan is currently undergoing the regular revision process, which takes place every 15 years. All Natura 2000 areas in the district will be given special attention in the new plan, and based on the experience gained in the project, specific management plans will be drawn up for the dune heath areas. The yearly budget for nature management in Nordjylland State Forest District (2006) is 2,45 mio DKK (330.000 Euro).

The Conservation Order for the project areas on Læsø was issued in the 1960'es. The aim of the conservation is to preserve the open heathland areas, but at the same time the Conservation Order specifies that it is not allowed to remove *Pinus sylvestris* or to use prescribed fire or mechanical methods for rejuvenation of the dwarf shrub vegetation. At the same time, natural and semi-natural stands of indigenous deciduous trees are protected under the Danish Forest Act. These restrictions mean that it is currently very difficult to implement the management methods needed to maintain a favourable conservation status of the dune heath on Læsø. Therefore, Nordjylland State Forest District is in the process of applying to the Conservation Board for a revision of the Conservation Order for the site, which will allow for clearing of invasive *Pinus sylvestris* and deciduous species like birch and aspen if necessary, and to implement prescribed mosaic burning and cutting down senile stands of *Calluna vulgaris* and other dwarf shrubs.

### Site 13(DK00FX121) - Svinkløv

All project areas on this site are state owned and managed by Thy State Forest District. They are included in the District Management Plan with special focus on Natura 2000 areas. The areas fenced for grazing during the project will be included in the general round of invitations to public tender for grazing rights in the beginning of 2006. The annual budget for nature management and restoration in Thy district is around 4,3 mio DKK (300.000 Euro).

### **3. Other activities**

The 30 information boards set up during the project will remain on the sites for at least 2 years after the project has come to an end. As part of the project, two sets of boards were produced, so that in case of vandalism or other damage to the boards, they can easily be replaced. Other costs related to replacing and eventually removing the boards will be borne by the relevant forest district, as part of the ordinary budget for information activities. Production and maintenance of information boards is an integrated task of the state forest districts. The second set of boards is kept at the premises of the relevant State Forest Districts. Fortunately, none of the boards have been in need of replacement yet, so a full set is still available.

The project website will be maintained by the beneficiary after the project has come to an end. After some time (1-2 years), the website will be reorganised so that the focus will be more on dune heath habitats in general and less on the project as such, but information on the project activities will still be available, as well as the various reports produced under the project.

In general, the state forest districts and counties have a high level of information activities, both on their websites, through the local press and through regular nature education activities, also particularly directed at schoolchildren. These activities will continue, using funds from the regular budgets for nature interpretation and information activities. As an example, Thy State Forest District has included several guided tours to the project areas in the annual list of activities in 2006.

The recommendations for further actions relating to restoration of amphibian habitats given in the report developed by Amphi Consult under Action F3 will be discussed at meetings between the consultant, the relevant counties and forest districts in the spring of 2006. Thy State Forest District, who housed the project management, will organise the meetings in cooperation with the counties. Funding for carrying out further activities to benefit amphibians will be taken from the budget for nature restoration. Viborg County has already committed funds to scraping of 2 ponds on site 16 (Bulbjerg), as delays in getting the necessary permits was the only reason for the action not being undertaken during the project period.

The management of dunes and dune heaths is of great interest to nature managers in other European countries. During the project, good contacts were established with Dutch site managers, and in the spring of 2006, a delegation from Halland in Sweden will visit some of the project areas in order to exchange experiences in management methods.