

Bauska Nature Park tidy up of territory

A good practice example for the motivation of environmentally friendly activities supported by the local authority.



Summary

The Bauska County's natural environment is a resource of active recreation and tourism. The Bauska County has several particularly protected areas, and the nature park „Bauska” (NATURA 2000 – EU protected natural area of 892.9 ha) is the most important of them. There are also several natural monuments and natural restricted areas.

Investment in public property of Bauska local municipality, adjacent to private person's property, is promoted by regulations on real estate tax rebate. The landowners can apply for a reduction of the real estate tax when implementing specific measures, such as tidying up the bordering territories, improving sidewalks, contributing to the construction or reconstruction of streets and/or children's and sports grounds, water parks, sewerage systems etc.

Objectives

1. To bring new ideas and insights to the development of the area, to improve the landscape and the environment by bringing in valuable experience.
2. To promote the development of the landscape and the maintenance of the public territory.
3. To stimulate the active participation of landowners in the maintenance of clean and tidy public spaces and the creation of a good environment.



Problem description

Landscape degradation in Bauska is caused by several objects— such as abandoned buildings, ruins, overhead transmission lines. To remove such objects or to plant rows of trees to cover them is therefore desirable. Also landscaped areas exist, where serious work is still needed to improve the landscape and the environment. In these areas it is necessary to cut bushes, to level the terrain by removing scraps, and to preserve and create ponds. In many places, the landscape is defaced by shrubs or old ruins of agricultural or industrial structures, as is the case on the right bank of the Ceplis and Jumpravmuiza manor.

Data and Facts – Contract

Participation: The territorial authority of Bauska is located in the central part of Latvia and Zemgale region, bordering the Republic of Lithuania, Iecava, Vecumnieki, Rundāle and Ozolnieki. The area of the county is 786.7 km², of which 6.14 km² is occupied by the city of Bauska. Forest areas occupy 17837.7 ha, agriculture utilized land 52970.5 ha.

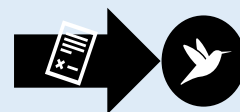
Involved parties:

Local authority – responsible for paying the tidying up of territory.

Landowners – carrying out the tidying up and getting reimbursement for it.

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RESULT-ORIENTED



Result-oriented tax relief scheme, reimbursing landscape improvements.

PUBLIC GOODS



Landscape and scenery

INDIRECT EFFECTS

Encourage entrepreneur activities: reduce unused agricultural land, promote tourism. Social effects – neighbors seeing adjacent area being tidied up, also are motivated to pay more attention to the improvement of their own area.

LOCATION

COUNTRY



Bauska Nature Park located near the boarder with Lithuania.

CONTRACT

The presented contract solution represents a public-private contract between local authority and landowners.

Contract conclusion:

Written agreement



Payment mechanism:

Incentive payments, tax reduction

The financing party is the local authority.



Funding/Payments:

The payment is issued by the local authority. If an applicant wants to perform tidy up activities on the territory of the local authority, first he/she needs an agreement with the authority first, then prove the expenses (eg. fuel, excavator costs, etc.) With the official and documented acceptance of the delivery of the activities, the costs are then reimbursed.



Start of the program:

2013

End: ongoing

Length of contract:

1 year

Management requirements for farmers: The landowners should follow the binding regulations of the Bauska local authority and Nature Protection Plan of the Bauska Nature Park.

The Nature Protection Plan of Bauska Nature park defines the territories 1.) in which the work can be done without asking alignment with the Nature Conservation Agency and 2.) in which territories the activities should have approval from Nature Conservation Agency.

Controls/monitoring: The results of the activities are monitored by the Bauska local authority.

Risk/uncertainties of participant:

Managerial risk – if landowners have not followed the binding regulations when applying for reimbursement and if they are not able to present the works done with justified documents etc.), cost reimbursement is not granted.



Context features

Landscape and climate: In the confluence of the Mūsa and Mēmele rivers, where the Lielupe River forms, many beautiful castles exist. The Nature Park “Bauska” has been established for the protection of natural, as well as cultural and historical heritage. The park unites the most important outcrops of calcareous earth in Latvia in a single protection complex, preserves the wilderness of parts of the Mūsa, Mēmele and Lielupe River, includes important spawning grounds of river lampreys and vimba fish as well as habitats of bats and hermit beetles of deciduous trees. In other words, many unique values can be found here, in an area being just a bit bigger than 1,000 hectares.

The Nature Park “Bauska” forms not only a natural value, but represents also a very rich territory in terms of cultural and historical value. One of the most beautiful castles near Bauska is Mežotne Castle, with its special castle mound. It is located on the left bank of Lielupe River, opposite to Mežotne Castle, and just like in movies, it is protected by an 8-metre tall rampart and a moat. It is believed to be one of the biggest Ancient Semigallians’ fortifications where nowadays Mežotne Castle Mound Festival takes place on the third Saturday of May. A legend says that a Semigallians’ port had been here. Mežotne castle mound and Vine hill are connected by a wooden footbridge going along the bank of the old valley of Lielupe River. From May to October, Mežotne castle mound and Mežotne Castle are connected by a small pontoon bridge across Lielupe River allowing the easier reach of objects in both banks of the river.

The rich world of the Nature Park “Bauska” can be discovered also during a cycle tour that leads cyclists from Bauska along the Lielupe River and allows the view and visit of the nearby castles, Bauska Castle, Rundāle Castle, and Mežotne Castle, as well as other objects.

Farm structure: As regards agricultural entrepreneurship, Bauska County is first and foremost associated with agricultural production for local residents and guests.

It must be acknowledged that the development of the agricultural sector in the region is an essential precondition for the sustainable growth of the territory, however, alongside traditional agriculture, also production, construction, transport, and service, as well as retail companies are successful in the region. In total, in 2018, there were 2,004 economically active companies currently registered in local authority of Bauska, of which 38% are farms, 41% are limited liability companies, and 9% are associations, as well as sole proprietorships.

SUCCESS OR FAILURE?



In general, the result-oriented tax relief scheme, reimbursing landscape improvements, can be classified as a successful contract solution.

The municipality, through EU projects, concludes contracts with local businesses (farmers/landowners) to clean up the area. Also, the Hunters' and fishermen's association of Bauska announces tenders for entrepreneurs to clean the Lielupe river bed. Practically, however, local landowners are often hampered to take advantage of this opportunity as they need to prepare a large number of documents before starting work.

Reasons for success:

- It is an innovative program supporting the tidying up of the territory – it stimulates active participation of landowners in the maintenance of clean and tidy local territory and the creation of clean environment.
- The reduction of the real estate tax is an attractive incentive for the landowners.
- The allowed/restriction activities are clearly defined in nature protection regulations.

SWOT analysis

Main Strengths

1. Local municipality is aware of environmental questions' importance and financially supports the tidying up of the territory.
2. With the Nature Park Bauska being a famous tourists' destination, Bauska Local authority benefits from the tidying up.
3. The Hunters' and Fishermen's Association of Bauska follow the cleaning of the Lielupe river and restocking the fish stock.

Main Weaknesses

1. Too much bureaucracy and documentation for applying for the payment
2. Little information about the contract/payment possibilities
3. Cases that persons/entrepreneurs apply after the job is done, but the agreement should be done before to receive payments

Main Opportunities

1. Information campaigns and activities to promote the tidy up activities
2. Possibility to list local municipality objects for tidying up
3. Other activities:
project competition "We lead our region" (10 projects X 1000 euros per year)
co-financing for associations in other environmental project competitions; EUR 10,000 per year

Main Threats

1. Regional reform (2021) that will merge the municipalities with new regulations foreseen
2. Lack of financial resources for contract solutions
3. Less objects (also very good) to carry out activities