



Call for Support of the 10 Points Program for Protection of Alpine Karst Areas

The “Verband der deutschen Höhlen- und Karstforscher e.V. (German Speleological Association) and the “Landesverband für Höhlen- und Karstforschung Bayern e.V. (Bavarian Speleological Association) are inviting the European and International speleological community to support their program for the protection of karstic areas in the German and Austrian part of the Alps.

Foreword

Recently more and more projects occur that contribute to a massive damage of alpine karstic areas. Right now only in the vicinity of Berchtesgaden and Salzburg the mountain areas of Untersberg, Lattengebirge, Hagengebirge and Tennengebirge are affected.

Destruction at the northern side of Untersberg

Since spring 2007 the forest management of Mayr-Melnhof is blasting several kilometres of forest and hunting roads in the descents of Untersberg. This results in slopes with 10 meters high blasted rock faces, water-bearing rifts were filled up, scree material was poured into the woods.

These interventions are widely visible, even from Salzburg city and the Bavarian surroundings.

It is to presume that the aim of this road project will be to develop the mountain plateau, Klingeralm and Vierkaseralm for hunting reasons.

Then the central karstic area with the biggest cave systems at Untersberg will be reached and the drainage area for the drinking water of Salzburg - the important Fürstenbrunner source will be affected.

Excessive deer stand, even mouflons were established, leads to the fact that no stable mountain forest rich in fir trees can develop.

Therefore it is not understandable that the Austrian administration contribute grants in considerable financial means of the disaster funds, that is taxpayers` money, to provide this.

Not understandable as well is the legal process resulting in a license of the government of Salzburg to permit road construction in the natural protected area of Untersberg. Laws concerning natural protection were not taken into account.

Moreover, it is not clear, which roads are approved and up to where they are approved. Although such licenses have to be open to the public via world wide web, we were not able to find them there.

Selling of wide areas of Tennengebirge

The forest state administration of Austria (Österreichische Bundesforste AG) apparently has plans for enormous property selling. Mountain massifs that once belonged to the state and so to the public, now are sold as hunting areas.



Especially alpine karstic areas that are not profitable for forestry are affected. Experiences so far shows that many owners of hunting areas are trying to keep the general public out of their territory (for example Blühnbachtal, Höchkönig – Arturhaus). Usually an excessive deer stock is tended, leading to problems in the growth of young trees and unmixing in mountain forests. Highly situated hunting huts are developed by roads. The protection of drinking water is uncertain.

Huge quarry near Scheukofen cave authorised

Near Sulzau, Austria at the bottom of the Hagengebirge a huge quarry is authorised.

Its expanse will be reach close to Scheukofen cave, one of the best known caves all around Salzburg with historical significance.

Forest roads at the karstplateau of Lattengebirge

In January 2007 a hurricane destroyed wide parts of the forests at the karstic plateau between Moosen and Lattenberg alp.

For the transport of the damaged trees a circular road and several cul-de-sacs were built in the kastic area. Karstreliefs were flattened and dolines were filled up.

In the meantime, another huge road project is close to realization. A road for trucks, from the “Untere Schwegelalm” to the hotel on top of mount “Predigtstuhl”.

Plans for the development of Hagengebirge plateau with roads

From Golling, Austria a road shall be developed to Grazen alp and further on to Anger alp. The expense of this activity is in no relation to the about 20 cows of the alp. Up to Anger alp the difference in height is about 800 meters through steep alpine terrain.

This project – if it will be realized – will not be less affective as the present destructions at Untersberg.

Also extremely problematic is, that the relative intact plateau of the Hagengebirge would be accessible to cars with all its negative consequences.

Summary

These five examples are representative for the many destructive interventions occurring more and more in the alps and that are accepted by politics and society with almost no resistance.

Unrestricted, and mostly high subsidized road development for agriculture and forestry seems to be the future in Bavaria and Austria.

Mountains and the whole landscape will be adapted to the most profitable machines.

The value of an intact scenery is essential for the population and tourism. This and the ecological basis of the regions remain unconsidered.



The participants of the congress “alpine underground / untertage alpin 2007” are fully supporting this 10 point program with the aim to preserve karstic areas in the German and Austrian part of the Alps to future generations.

Alpine karstic areas are usually situated in higher altitudes, not readily but with high ecological significance, yet not badly affected by mankind.

Nevertheless, karst areas are very vulnerable to interference. For example, construction projects are often very expensive and visible from a long distance. It may take decades for re-growing vegetation to cover it. Even worse, major damage to the extremely thin humus layer can lead to it being completely washed away. Karst areas often provide essential water resource storage, but are particularly susceptible to pollution. Rapid discharge of surface water through the alpenstock results in a low level of filtering activity, and so pollution easily penetrates to underground water systems for a long time.

These three parameters: natural biosphere with high ecological significance, high sensibility and low commercial relevance lead inevitably to the conclusion that protection of alpine karst areas must have a high priority.

Following steps are essential

- 1) No further development of roads for agriculture, forestry and touristic construction projects in karstic plateaus or catchment basins. No further expansion of skiing areas, reshaping the karstic relief.**
- 2) No further expansion of road construction or development projects in protected areas.**
- 3) Prohibition of herbicides, pesticides and all other substances that endanger the groundwater system in karstic areas.**
- 4) No further subsidies to increase the agricultural and forestry use of karstic areas – if necessary monetary compensation should be payable for landscape appropriate cultivation or for giving up of these activities.**
- 5) Promotions for ecotourism that protects the original character and natural beauty of the landscape. Activities requiring large interventions and disturbances are to be refused.**
- 6) Hunting is essential, as long as its aim is a natural growth of woods and properly controlled deer population through selective culling. The all-year closing of areas for public and science because of trophy hunting can not be accepted.**
- 7) Waste disposal sites cause exposure to karst waters. Waste of all kinds must be removed out of karstic areas.**
- 8) No selling of karstic areas out of public ownership**



- 9) Promotion of research works in alpine karst areas and its consideration in regional and protected area planning.**
- 10) Generation of widespread protected areas with the aim to preserve original natural biospheres and landscape and so to render added value to the region.**

Ramsau, 10th November 2007

The following organisations fully supporting this 10 point program with the aim to preserve karstic areas in the German and Austrian part of the Alps to future generations.

IUCN – The World Conservation Union

Dr.Franci Gabrovsek

UIS – International Union of Speleology

Jean-Pierre Bartholeyns

FSUE - Speleological Federation of the European Union

OlivierVidal, Jean-ClaudeThies

VÖH – Austrian speleological Association

Christoph Spötl

VdHK – German Speleological Federation

Bärbel Vogel

LVHKB – Bavarian Speleological Association

Bernhard Nerreter