

Developing a European Coastal Dune Management Network

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Abstract

An informal network of European sand dune conservation managers and researchers has existed since a conference in Leiden, the Netherlands in 1987. At the European Symposium 'Coastal Dunes of the Atlantic Biogeographical Region' held in Southport, England, during 1998, the sand dune community met again and reaffirmed its presence. This event identified the benefits of sharing experience of conservation practice through a European network of common interest in coastal dune management. To this purpose and with the support of the EUCC-The Coastal Union, a first step was taken to develop a European Coastal Dune Management Network at the Littoral 2004 conference, Aberdeen, Scotland during September 2004. The developing network aims to promote sustainable use and share experience of conservation practice in coastal dune management amongst a distinctive and yet diverse community. The Dunes and Estuaries 2005 conference provides an opportunity to develop the Network as a platform that will benefit European coastal dune management.

Keywords: European Sand Dune Network; Conservation practice; Sustainable use.

Introduction

In 1987 academics and managers of sand dune coasts from throughout Europe came together in Leiden, the Netherlands, for the first time to discuss future directions for conservation management (Meulen van der *et al.*, 1989). This meeting set the seeds for a network of coastal dune management practitioners and academics.

Following 1987 the coastal dune community continued to share their understanding and practice using an informal network and taking opportunities to meet at coastal conferences and events held throughout Europe. However in 1998, reflecting the 1987 event, researchers and managers from the dune community met again at the European Symposium 'Coastal Dunes of the Atlantic Biogeographical Region' held in Southport, north west England (Houston *et al.*, 2001). Arising from this symposium was a clear call for a coastal sand dune network to be developed further with the purpose of sharing conservation practice on a more active and focused basis.

With the support of the EUCC-The Coastal Union, a first step was taken to develop a European Coastal Dune Management Network at the Littoral 2004 conference, Aberdeen, Scotland during September 2004. At this meeting a field excursion to the Sands of Forvie NNR was used to launch the European Sand Dune Management Network. It was quite appropriate that the network was launched in the field by a group of managers and researchers standing on a high mobile dune while sharing their understandings of dune management.



Fig. 1. Launch of the European Sand Dune Network at Sands of Forvie NNR, Scotland.

The Coastal Dune Community

As coastal dune managers and researchers operate in the context of coastal zone management they are members of many communities, but their experience is based firmly in the distinctive environment of coastal sand dunes. The coastal dune community is diverse and yet distinct. Participation in the European Coastal Dune Network is taking a 'bottom-up' approach aiming to involve the major stakeholders. These include, amongst others, conservation and recreation managers, researchers, engineers and representatives of the golf sector, water companies and the military.

Purpose of the Network

The overarching purpose of the Network is to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the European coastal dune resource. With the support of the EUCC-The Coastal Union the developing Network aims to do this through sharing experience of European conservation practice in coastal dune management. The purpose of this is to increase the capability of those charged with the responsibility for coastal dune management and to improve their practices by ensuring that they are informed by current understandings and sound research. Linkages between sectors in this diverse community will be promoted. Readily observed and tangible benefits will be identified for participants. These may include practitioner led workshops and field meetings and a Network website hosting a discussion forum, best practice reports, summary research findings and a contact list.

Conclusions

The European Sand Dune Management Network continues to grow. The Dunes and Estuaries 2005 conference provides an opportunity for the dune community to consider its priorities, promote dialogue and build relationships that will further develop the Network as a platform that will benefit European coastal dune management.

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References

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