

ENVIRONMENT AND WATER IN UPPER AUSTRIA

Summary of the Upper Austrian Environmental Report 2012

»Gelbfeldweltwegorte«
Oil on canvas, 180 x 200 cm, 2007
Gunter Damisch



LAND

OBERÖSTERREICH



“Protecting and securing our natural resources as well as ensuring sustainability are important aspects of our work to provide an environment worth living in. We strive to encourage ecological awareness and demonstrate ways in which people can act in a more eco-friendly way. Environmental subsidies systematically support the strategies of the Directorate of Environment and Water Management.”

Ulrike Jäger-Urban, Head of the Directorate of Environment and Water Management

With the Upper Austrian Environmental Report 2012 the Directorate of Environment and Water Management takes stock of the so far implemented measures and also takes a look at current and future challenges. About 60 authors from different departments have developed the Upper Austrian Environmental Report, which has to be published every six years due to the Upper Austrian Environmental Protection Law. The report was compiled under the management of the Directorate of Environment and Water Management and the political responsibility of Rudi Anschober, member of the Upper Austrian government.

The Upper Austrian Environmental Report shows that the great efforts to protect air, soil and water are already bearing fruit, though there is still work to be done and further challenges have to be coped with.

The energy transition in Upper Austria

The energy transition in Upper Austria is a great challenge, but also a great opportunity. The increase in energy efficiency, the transition towards renewable energy sources and the commitment against nuclear power result in independence from energy imports for Upper Austria. The share of renewable energy in total energy consumption was increased to 36 percent in 2009, the one of electric power consumption to 86 percent. The modernization of 260 small hydropower plants contributed to that increase, which was exemplary for the nation. Thus, a surplus power yield of 80 gigawatt hours per year was gained and concurrently a renaturation was achieved, for example by the installation of fish passes.

Renewable energy creates green jobs and contributes to climate protection

In addition, Upper Austria relies on new “green” technologies. These technologies open up export opportunities for local companies, create future-proof green jobs and stabilize energy costs. Numerous flagship projects in the strategic field of energy were implemented, such as the first Austrian science center WELIOS on the subject of energy and also initial programs to fight fuel poverty. Furthermore, the energy transition is an important contribution to climate protection.

The climate change itself, however, cannot be stopped any more, but only be mitigated in its effects. Therefore, Upper Austria focuses on prevention and develops adaption strategies to climate change.

Success in reducing traditional air pollutants and particulate matter

Contrary to climatically relevant greenhouse gas emissions, traditional air pollutants such as carbon monoxide and sulfur dioxide are no longer an issue in Upper Austria. Even with fine particulate air pollution a significant downward trend is measurable – due to the Immission Control Act for air. However, there is still much to do on this topic to reduce the emissions from transport, heating and industry even further. A startling pilot project on mercury contamination in schools proved that mercury also can significantly affect indoor air quality.

Pollution control and renaturation of surface waters, protection of groundwater and drinking water and further expansion of flood protection are current challenges

We can be proud of the high water quality in our lakes and rivers due to long lasting and consistent efforts in the field of waste water management by continuously expanding the sewage and wastewater treatment systems. The Upper Austrian strategy “Zukunft Trinkwasser” (“Future Drinking Water”) aims for protecting Upper Austria’s drinking water and for ensuring a sustainable supply. For instance 500 newly established protected areas contribute to a better protection of our drinking water. Water is life – and as water is not just our basis of life, but also a habitat for animals and plants, the renaturation and protection of surface waters is a major task for the future. Most of the required measures are regulated in the “Upper Austrian Redevelopment Program for running water bodies”. Another challenge is extensive flood protection, in which we invest a lot



»Redlbach« brook in Frankenburg



in order to protect affected persons from significant damage in the case of floods. An important tool is the “Upper Austrian Flood Protection Plan”. Austria’s largest installation for flood control is the “Machland dam” which protects the inhabitants of the Machland area at a length of more than 36 kilometers.

Compact urban development and protection against the impact of pollutants preserve the limited resource “soil”

As water, soil is also a limited resource that has to be protected. Since 2003, Upper Austria is a member of the European Land and Soil Alliance, and since then has continuously increased soil conservation measures. This is done through measures such as subsidies for space-saving housing development. Furthermore, the quality of sewage sludge and compost is monitored in order to keep the impact of pollutants into soil as low as possible. Another important task is to raise awareness of the importance of healthy soils as basis of life. For this purpose, workshops for schools, lectures, soil festivals and so on are organized to inform people about the benefits of compact urban development and the ways to maintain soil health.

A healthy soil is also a prerequisite for healthy food.

A component thereto is an agricultural practice without the use of genetically modified organisms (GMO). Therefore Upper Austria has passed the “Oö. Gentechnik-Vorsorgegesetz 2006” (“Upper Austrian Genetic Engineering Precaution Law 2006”) as well as the “Oö. GVO Sicherheitsabstandsverordnung” (“Upper Austrian GMO Save Distance Act”) and co-founded the “European Network of GMO-free regions”.

Waste avoidance and efficiency in waste treatment are important aims of waste management

Upper Austria follows the principle of provision and prevention also in the field of waste management, where the avoidance of waste is a major issue. With the flagship project “ReVital” a milestone has been successfully set in the reuse of old goods.

Important aims for the future are the reduction of food waste, the increase of separate collection of organic waste and to establish better ways of collecting and recycling construction waste.

The task of waste management is to become even more efficient and customer-focused. The use of energy for district heating from waste incineration plants in Linz and Wels is an example of efficient waste management. This enables an increase of the efficiency of combustion systems and provides district heating for a total of 14,000 households.

Maintaining a high quality of life – for ourselves and for future generations

The Upper Austrian Environmental Report 2012 clearly shows that long lasting efforts and investments are worthwhile and lead to sustainable success. Protecting our resources air, soil and water is the basis for maintaining a high quality of life – not only for ourselves, but also for future generations.

»Soil festival«, April 2009 in Ritzlhof



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- Department of Ground Water
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- Department of Surface Water Management
- Department of Environmental, Structural and
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- Department of Environmental Protection

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