

Johannes Treß

## A New Framework Concept for 'Vessertal – Thüringen Forest'

*Compiling and drafting locally consultative frameworks (hereafter framework concepts) is stipulated by the Seville Strategy and is a rigorous application criterion for new biosphere reserves in Germany. In one of the oldest German biosphere reserves, Vessertal – Thüringen Forest, a framework concept was finalised in January 2007.*

It defines the major objectives of the biosphere reserve on the way to becoming a model region for sustainable development. Its focus is on active, competent support for the structural change taking place in the region, which is a result of the demographic development and that of climate change.

The public was substantially involved in this process during the summer of 2006. The draft was displayed for the public in 15 municipalities and was available on the website of the biosphere reserve. Fifty statements were submitted in writing. The content was presented to the citizens in eleven information events, which also offered the opportunity for discussion. All in all, the framework concept was amended in over 100 points as a result of the involvement of the public.

### Some core statements taken from the framework concept:

- Nature oriented silviculture should improve the stability and structure of forest stand in the long-term; the percentage of spruce should be reduced in favour of beech.
- Agriculture is the economic branch traditionally shaping the landscape. In order to preserve it, environmentally friendly, non-intensive production practices and the marketing of regional products should be further encouraged.
- Regionally adapted offers to tourists should make the region more attractive and contribute to tourists prolonging their stays. The biosphere reserve administration should be better integrated in the local tourist marketing.

- The standard and extent of public transport should be maintained, optimised and more strongly integrated into the tourist offers. It should become an attractive alternative to individual motorised transport. Public transport systems should be better coordinated, the transport networks of road and rail should be better inter-connected.
- As a contribution to climate protection, renewable energies should be encouraged in the biosphere reserve and the

potential of saving energy by insulating buildings and installing modern heating plants should be taken advantage of.

- In order to preserve the landscape, the mountain grassland should be preserved, current forest should be converted to mixed forest and the typical overall appearance of the villages should be reconstituted, with care.
- The continuity of flowing waters and the valley areas should be

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improved. For example, piping or weirs should be eliminated or made to be more permeable.

- Moors play a role in preserving the unique animal and plant life, thus moor renaturing should continue. For that purpose dikes will be constructed and spruces removed.
- Existing large undivided regions should be safeguarded to help preserve species which need large-scale habitats such as the red deer and the black stork.
- Public relation and environmental education activities will be improved. The focus is a new information centre at the Rennsteig Station run by a private operator and sponsor.

*Johannes Treß is head of the Administration of the Vessertal – Thüringen Forest biosphere reserve.*

*The framework concept of the biosphere reserve Vessertal – Thüringen Forest contains 135 pages with 100 pictures and six maps as well as a CD-ROM with in-depth portrayals of the region. It can be ordered online at [www.biosphaerenreservat-vessertal.de](http://www.biosphaerenreservat-vessertal.de) at the price of 10 euros plus postage and packing costs.*

## UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Utwe

### Federated States of Micronesia

The Utwe biosphere reserve, which was designated as recently as 2005, is located in the southwest of the small volcanic island of Kosrae in the South Pacific. While the interior of the island is rough and rugged, the coastal areas consist of lush tropical rain forests and white sandy beaches. This rather small biosphere

reserve has an area of 17 km<sup>2</sup> but nevertheless boasts a variety of ecosystems like swamps and mangrove forests, coral reefs and sea grass beds.

Modern development and industry have scarcely touched Kosrae as the island state is located 300 sea miles away

from its nearest neighbour. Despite the isolation, even here the stock of marine animals has been decimated. The impressive giant clams as well as turtles, lobsters and types of coral are all threatened with extinction.

Therefore conservation is the priority of this biosphere reserve. In the core area made up of mangroves and marine areas any use of natural resources is prohibited. The terrestrial buffer zone protects the core area against external pressures; this is also protected as a no-take zone. The people living in Utwe use the transition area for agricultural activities, fishing and tourism, which are the main sources of income. A plan for land use propagates sustainable economic systems in the transition area.

*Further information:*

*<http://www.unesco.org/mabdb/br/brdir/directory/biores.asp?mode=all&Code=MIC+01>*

