

Examples of case studies on strategic actions to enhance implementation

Example: The Norwegian Master Plan for Hydropower Development

The Norwegian Master Plan for Hydropower Development has now been discontinued in Norway. The plan has however served its purpose well since its establishment in the mid-1980s until 2016. The plan contributed to a balanced development of renewable energy from hydropower projects while also emphasizing important environmental considerations. It indicated a development order for large hydropower projects, with the aim of realizing the best and least conflicting projects first. It has been a useful tool for reducing conflicts in Norwegian hydropower development and provided a good overview of our resources. The reason for discontinuing the Master Plan was mainly that there were few remaining projects left in the Master Plan portfolio.

The Master Plan for Hydropower Development set out an order of priority for projects that could be considered for licensing, and divided them into two categories. Category I included projects where licensing procedures could be started immediately. In addition, licensing procedures could be started immediately for some projects that were exempted from the plan. Projects in Category II and projects not covered in the plan should not be submitted for licensing. The order of priority was based on economic considerations and assessments of the degree of conflict with other interests. The intention was to ensure that the river systems that provided the cheapest power and where development would have the smallest environmental impacts were developed first.

However, the fact that a project had been approved in the Master Plan did not entail a binding advance commitment to grant a license, only that the application might be processed. The licensing authorities turned also down applications for projects in Category I. Applications that were in conflict with the plan could be rejected without further process.

Example: Development of management objectives for good ecological status

We refer to this relevant case study already posted on the website of the UN Environment: <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/protecting-biodiversity-norwegian-style>

Example: Principles for decision-making contributing to sustainable use

The Norwegian Nature Diversity Act provides an important tool for a cross-sectoral approach to sustainable nature management by establishing principles for decision making which apply to all sectors. In our view, these principles are contributing to sustainable use across sectors. The principles set out in the Nature Diversity Act serve as guidelines for the exercise of public authority, including when an administrative agency allocates grants or subsidies, and for the management of real property. Decisions shall state how these principles have been applied in an assessment.

The first principle states that management must be knowledge-based. Public Authorities' decisions that affect biological, geological and landscape diversity shall, as far as is reasonable, be based on scientific knowledge about the population status of species, the range and ecological status of habitat types, and the impacts of environmental pressures. The knowledge required shall be in reasonable proportion to the nature of the case and the risk of damage to biological, geological and landscape diversity.

The second principle is the precautionary principle. When a decision is made in the absence of adequate information on the impacts it may have on the natural environment, the aim shall be to avoid possible significant damage to biological, geological or landscape diversity. If there is a risk of serious or irreversible damage to biological, geological or landscape diversity, lack of knowledge shall not be used as a reason for postponing or not introducing management measures.

The third principle is the ecosystem approach and cumulative environmental effects. This states that any pressure on an ecosystem shall be assessed on the basis of the cumulative environmental effects on the ecosystem now or in the future.

The fourth principle is about environmentally sound techniques and methods of operation. In order to prevent or limit damage to biological, geological or landscape diversity, use shall be made of such methods and such techniques and siting of industrial and other activities as, based on an overall assessment of past, present and future use of such diversity and economic factors, produce the best results for society at large.

Example: The development of measures on safeguarding threatened species and habitats

Norway's national target is that 'no species or habitat types will become extinct or be lost, and the status of threatened and near-threatened species and habitat types will be improved'. Norway is now working on implementing measures to safeguard threatened species and habitat types. Such measure could include both conservation measures to protect species and habitats, and action to reduce the pressures and impacts associated with individual developments. It is important that all the sectors are collaborating to find the best possible measures. The work therefore involves a multi-sectoral collaboration to find the best management tools to improve the conservation status of approximately 90 species and 35 habitat types. These are species that are critically endangered or endangered in Norway and that meet the additional criterion that a substantial proportion of their European population is found in mainland Norway or in Svalbard. Of the habitat types, we are now considering all the habitat types that are considered threatened.