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Press release on the recharge.green project: results and conference

Energy and nature in the Alps: a balancing act

The Alps offer great potential for renewable energy production. But this simultaneously increases the pressure on nature. The partners in the international recharge.green project have found ways to ensure this balancing act succeeds. They will be presenting their results at the final conference to be held on 20-21 May 2015 in Sonthofen, Germany.

When we use water, biomass, wind and sun for the production of energy in the Alps, this all benefits the climate. Yet the production of renewable energy can also have negative effects on the various services provided by nature, such as clean drinking water. The recharge.green project is contributing to the sustainable use of landscapes where ecosystems can continue to operate and provide services for people, while at the same time improving power generation. The recharge.green experts have estimated the potential of renewable energy from wind, water, forest biomass and solar energy in the Alpine countries. They have developed scenarios to recognise any conflicts of aims with nature conservation, environmental protection and other ecosystem services. A decision support system has also been developed for politicians and energy producers, which has for example shown that hydropower generation could be increased by 10% in an economically and ecologically sustainable way. Chris Walzer of the University of Veterinary Medicine in Vienna describes the challenge: “The results generated by our decision support system merely provide a basis for discussion. Decisions are only balanced once all stakeholders have been heard and a solution found that permits all parties to achieve the greatest possible consensus”.

More fish-friendly use of hydropower

To ensure that the results of the project can be implemented in practice and optimised on the basis of actual experience, the recharge.green partners have tested the instruments and models in pilot areas and examined their transferability to other Alpine regions. The pilot areas have informed the local and regional stakeholders as well as the public of the results. In Bavaria, for example, the use of hydropower on the River Upper Iller was investigated and different measures to improve the (fish-) ecological potential have been developed, as Gerhard Haimerl of the Bayerische Elektrizitätswerke GmbH (Bavarian electricity company) explains.



Project results attract international attention

Under the motto “Balancing Alpine energy and nature”, the project partners will be presenting their findings to the public on 20 and 21 May 2015 at the final conference to be held in Sonthofen, Germany. Some 100 participants from every Alpine country will witness a demonstration of the decision support system created by recharge.green. Representatives from the pilot areas will report on their experiences of the processes developed for resolving conflicts of aims between energy use, nature and landscape. There will also be external contributions to the programme, for example from Swiss expert Astrid Björnsen Gurung or from Georg Bayerle, the Bavarian broadcasting service’s specialist in mountains and the environment.

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Print quality image material available at <http://www.recharge-green.eu/infoservice-2/media-information/>.

recharge.green – balancing Alpine energy and nature

The Alps have great potential for the use of renewable energy. Thereby they can make a valuable contribution to mitigating climate change. This, however, means increasing pressures on nature. What could be the impact of such changes on the habitats of animals and plants? How do they affect land use and soil quality? How much renewable energy can reasonably be used? The project recharge.green brings together 15 partners to develop strategies and tools for decision-making on such issues. The analysis and comparison of the costs and benefits of renewable energy, ecosystem services, and potential trade-offs is a key component in this process. The project runs from October 2012 to June 2015 and is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund in the Alpine Space Programme.

www.recharge-green.eu